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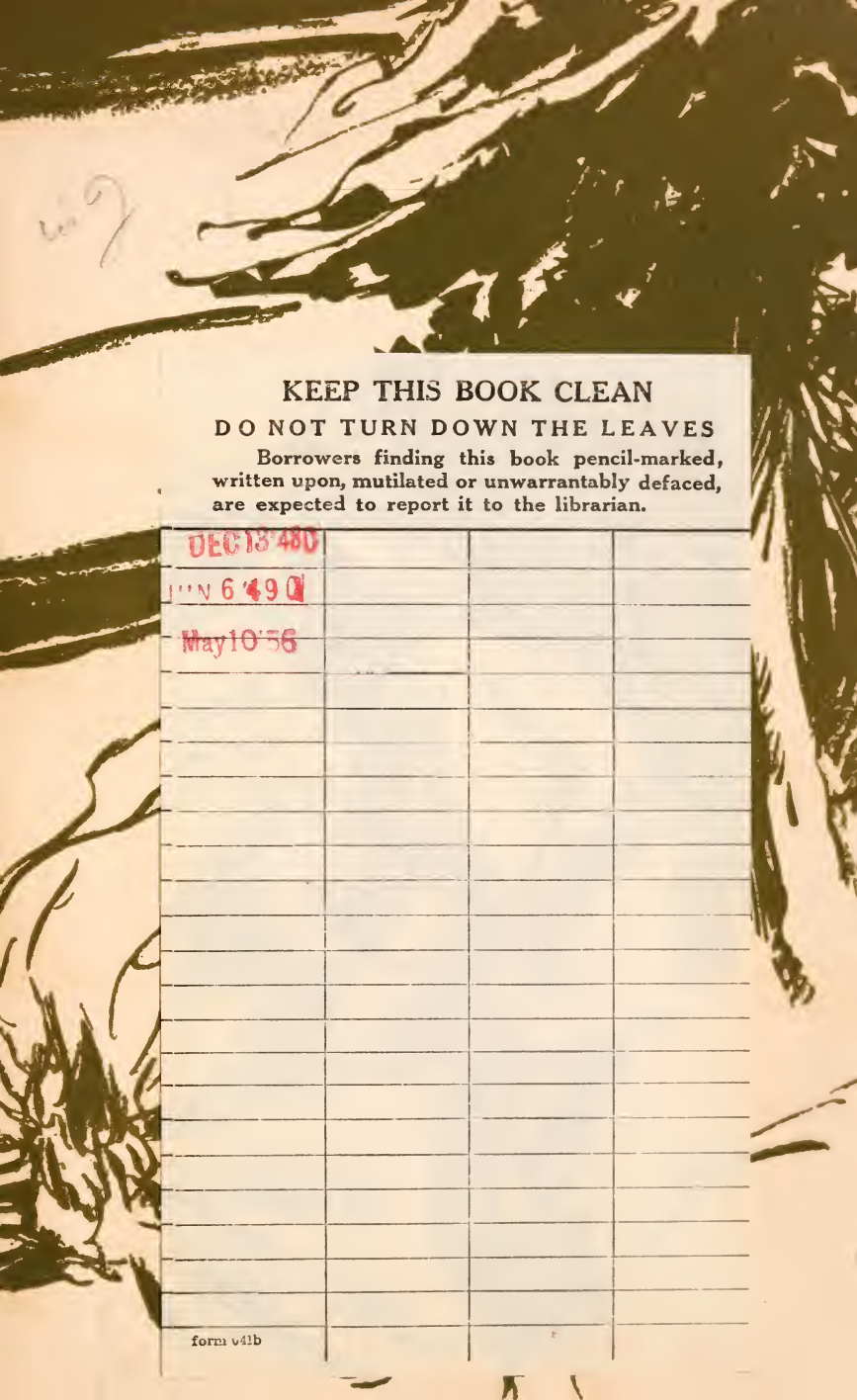

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Three of the men hauled, the other with a pole, kept it clear of the rocks (*See page 45*).

UNGAVA BOB

A Winter's Tale

by

DILLON WALLACE

Author of

"The Lure of the Labrador Wild"

Illustrated by

SAMUEL M. PALMER

GROSSET & DUNLAP, Publishers

NEW YORK

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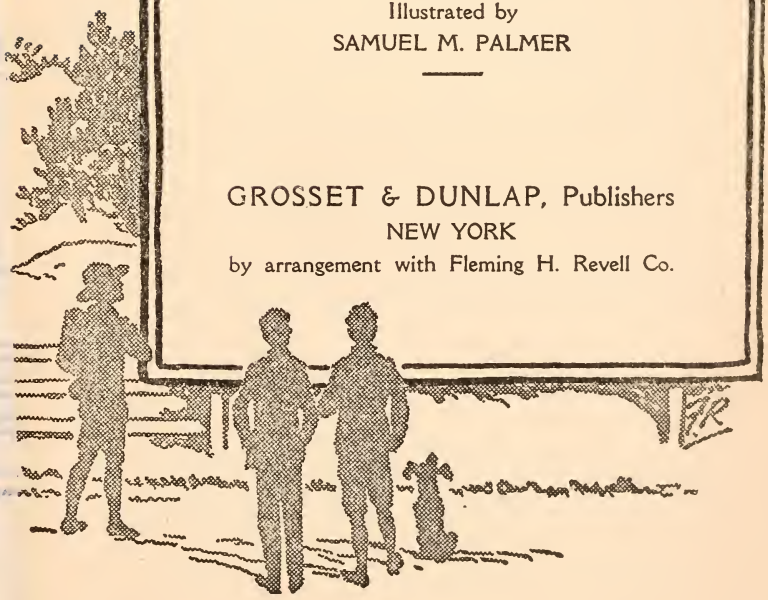

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To My Sisters
Annie and Jessie

FOREWORD

Tempting boys to be what they should be—giving them in wholesome form what they want—that is the purpose and power of Scouting. To help parents and leaders of youth secure *books boys like best* that are also best for boys, the Boy Scouts of America organized EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY. The books included, formerly sold at prices ranging from $1.50 to $2.00 but, by special arangement with the several publishers interested, are now sold in the EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY Edition at $1.00 per volume.

The books of EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY were selected by the Library Commission of the Boy Scouts of America, consisting of George F. Bowerman, Librarian, Public Library of the District of Columbia; Harrison W. Craver, Director, Engineering Societies Library, New York City; Claude G. Leland, Superintendent, Bureau of Libraries, Board of Education, New York City; Edward F. Stevens, Librarian, Pratt Institute Free Library, Brooklyn, N. Y., and Franklin K. Mathiews, Chief Scout Li-

brarian. Only such books were chosen by the Commission as proved to be, by *a nation wide canvas,* most in demand by the boys themselves. Their popularity is further attested by the fact that in the EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY Edition, more than a million and a quarter copies of these books have already been sold.

We know so well, are reminded so often of the worth of the good book and great, that too often we fail to observe or understand the influence for good of a boy's recreational reading. Such books may influence him for good or ill as profoundly as his play activities, of which they are a vital part. The needful thing is to find stories in which the heroes have the characteristics boys so much admire—unquenchable courage, immense resourcefulness, absolute fidelity, conspicuous greatness. We believe the books of EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY measurably well meet this challenge.

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA,

James E. West

Chief Scout Executive.

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UNGAVA BOB

I

HOW BOB GOT HIS "TRAIL"

IT was an evening in early September twenty years ago. The sun was just setting in a radiance of glory behind the dark spruce forest that hid the great unknown, unexplored Labrador wilderness which stretched away a thousand miles to the rocky shores of Hudson's Bay and the bleak desolation of Ungava. With their back to the forest and the setting sun, drawn up in martial line stood the eight or ten white-washed log buildings of the Hudson's Bay Company Post, just as they had stood for a hundred years, and just as they stand to-day, looking out upon the wide waters of Eskimo Bay, which now, reflecting the glow of the setting sun, shone red and sparkling like a sea of rubies.

On a clearing to the eastward of the post between the woods and water was an irregular cluster of deerskin wigwams, around which

loitered dark-hued Indians puffing quietly at their pipes, while Indian women bent over kettles steaming at open fires, cooking the evening meal, and little Indian boys with bows shot harmless arrows at soaring gulls overhead, and laughed joyously at their sport as each arrow fell short of its mark. Big wolf dogs skulked here and there, looking for bits of refuse, snapping and snarling ill-temperedly at each other.

A group of stalwart, swarthy-faced men, dressed in the garb of northern hunters—light-coloured moleskin trousers tucked into the tops of long-legged sealskin moccasins, short jackets and peakless caps—stood before the post kitchen or lounged upon the rough board walk which extended the full length of the reservation in front of the servants' quarters and storehouses. They were watching a small sailboat that, half a mile out upon the red flood, was bowling in before a smart breeze, and trying to make out its single occupant. Finally some one spoke.

"'Tis Bob Gray from Wolf Bight, for that's sure Bob's punt."

"Yes," said another, "'tis sure Bob."

Their curiosity satisfied, all but two strolled

into the kitchen, where supper had been announced.

Douglas Campbell, the older of the two that remained, was a short, stockily built man with a heavy, full, silver-white beard, and skin tanned dark as an Indian's by the winds and storms of more than sixty years. A pair of kindly blue eyes beneath shaggy white eyebrows gave his face an appearance at once of strength and gentleness, and an erect bearing and well-poised head stamped him a leader and a man of importance.

The other was a tall, wiry, half-breed Indian, with high cheek bones and small, black, shifting eyes that were set very close together and imparted to the man a look of craftiness and cunning. He was known as "Micmac John," but said his real name was John Sharp. He had drifted to the coast a couple of years before on a fishing schooner from Newfoundland, whence he had come from Nova Scotia. From the coast he had made his way the hundred and fifty miles to the head of Eskimo Bay, and there took up the life of a trapper. Rumour had it that he had committed murder at home and had run away to escape the penalty; but this rumour was unverified, and there was no means of learning the

truth of it. Since his arrival here the hunters had lost, now and again, martens and foxes from their traps, and it was whispered that Micmac John was responsible for their disappearance. Nevertheless, without any tangible evidence that he had stolen them, he was treated with kindness, though he had made no real friends amongst the natives.

When the last of the men had closed the kitchen door behind him, Micmac John approached Douglas, who had been standing somewhat apart, evidently lost in his thoughts as he watched the approaching boat, and asked:

"Have ye decided about the Big Hill trail, sir?"

"Yes, John."

"And am I to hunt it this year, sir?"

"No, John, I can't let ye have un. I told Bob Gray th' day I'd let him hunt un. Bob's a smart lad, and I wants t' give he th' chance."

Micmac John cast a malicious glance at old Douglas. Then with an assumed indifference, and shrug of his shoulders as he started to walk away, remarked:

"All right if you've made yer mind up, but you'll be sorry fer it."

Douglas turned fiercely upon him.

"What mean you, man? Be that a threat? Speak now!"

"I make no threats, but boys can't hunt, and he'll bring ye no fur. Ye'll get nothin' fer yer pains. Ye'll be sorry fer it."

"Well," said Douglas as Micmac John walked away to join the others in the kitchen, "I've promised th' lad, an' what I promises I does, an I'll stand by it."

Bob Gray, sitting at the tiller of his little punt, *The Rover*, was very happy—happy because the world was so beautiful, happy because he lived, and especially happy because of the great good fortune that had come to him this day when Douglas Campbell granted his request to let him hunt the Big Hill trail, with its two hundred good marten and fox traps.

It had been a year of misfortune for the Grays. The previous winter when Bob's father started out upon his trapping trail a wolverine persistently and systematically followed him, destroying almost every fox and marten that he had caught. All known methods to catch or kill the animal were resorted to, but with the cunning that its prehistoric ancestors had handed down to

it, it avoided every pitfall. The fox is a poor bungler compared with the wolverine. The result of all this was that Richard Gray had no fur in the spring with which to pay his debt at the trading store.

Then came the greatest misfortune of all. Emily, Bob's little sister, ventured too far out upon a cliff one day to pluck a vagrant wild flower that had found lodgment in a crevice, and in reaching for it, slipped to the rocks below. Bob heard her scream as she fell, and ran to her assistance. He found her lying there, quite still and white, clutching the precious blossom, and at first he thought she was dead. He took her in his arms and carried her tenderly to the cabin. After a while she opened her eyes and came back to consciousness, but she had never walked since. Everything was done for the child that could be done. Every man and woman in the Bay offered assistance and suggestions, and every one of them tried a remedy; but no relief came.

All the time things kept going from bad to worse with Richard Gray. Few seals came in the bay that year and he had no fat to trade at the post. The salmon fishing was a flat failure

As the weeks went on and Emily showed no improvement Douglas Campbell came over to Wolf Bight with the suggestion,

"Take th' maid t' th' mail boat doctor. He'll sure fix she up." And then they took her—Bob and his mother—ninety miles down the bay to the nearest port of call of the coastal mail boat, while the father remained at home to watch his salmon nets. Here they waited until finally the steamer came and the doctor examined Emily.

"There's nothing I can do for her," he said. "You'll have to send her to St. Johns to the hospital. They'll fix her all right there with a little operation."

"An' how much will that cost?" asked Mrs. Gray.

"Oh," he replied, "not over fifty dollars—fifty dollars will cover it."

"An' if she don't go?"

"She'll never get well." Then, as a dismissal of the subject, the doctor, turning to Bob, asked: "Well, youngster, what's the outlook for fur next season?"

"We hopes there'll be some, sir."

"Get some silver foxes. Good silvers are worth five hundred dollars cash in St. Johns."

The mail boat steamed away with the doctor, and Bob and his mother, with Emily made as comfortable as possible in the bottom of the boat, turned homeward.

It was hard to realize that Emily would never be well again, that she would never romp over the rocks with Bob in the summer or ride with him on the sledge when he took the dogs to haul wood in the winter. There would be no more merry laughter as she played about the cabin. This was before the days when the mission doctors with their ships and hospitals came to the Labrador to give back life to the sick and dying of the coast. Fifty dollars was more money than any man of the bay save Douglas Campbell had ever seen, and to expect to get such a sum was quite hopeless, for in those days the hunters were always in debt to the company, and all they ever received for their labours were the actual necessities of life, and not always these.

Emily was the only cheerful one now of the three. When she saw her mother crying, she took her hand and stroked it, and said: "Mother, dear, don't be cryin' now. 'Tis not so bad. If God wants that I get well He'll make me well. An' I wants to stay home with you an' see you

an' father an' Bob, an' I'd be *dreadful* homesick to go off so far."

Emily and Bob had always been great chums and the blow to him seemed almost more than he could bear. His heart lay in his bosom like a stone. At first he could not think, but finally he found himself repeating what the doctor had said about silver foxes,—"five hundred dollars cash." This was more money than he could imagine, but he knew it was a great deal. The company gave sixty dollars *in trade* for the finest silver foxes. That was supposed a liberal price—but five hundred dollars in *cash!*

He looked longingly towards the blue hills that held their heads against the distant sky line. Behind those hills was a great wilderness rich in foxes and martens—but no man of the coast had ever dared to venture far within it. It was the land of the dreaded Nascaupees, the savage red men of the North, who it was said would torture to a horrible death any who came upon their domain.

The Mountaineer Indians who visited the bay regularly and camped in summer near the post, told many tales of the treachery of their northern neighbours, and warned the trappers that they

had already blazed their trails as far inland as it was safe for them to go. Any hunter encroaching upon the Nascaupee territory, they insisted, would surely be slaughtered.

Bob had often heard this warning, and did not forget it now; but in spite of it he felt that circumstances demanded risks, and for Emily's sake he was willing to take them. If he could only get traps, *he* would make the venture, with his parents' consent, and blaze a new trail there, for it would be sure to yield a rich reward. But to get traps needed money or credit, and he had neither.

Then he remembered that Douglas Campbell had said one day that he would not go to the hills again if he could get a hunter to take the Big Hill trail to hunt on shares. That was an inspiration. He would ask Douglas to let him hunt it on the usual basis—two-thirds of the fur caught to belong to the hunter and one-third to the owner. With this thought Bob's spirits rose.

"'Twill be fine—'twill be a grand chance," said he to himself, "an Douglas lets me hunt un, an father lets me go."

He decided to speak to Douglas first, for if Douglas was agreeable to the plan his parents

would give their consent more readily. Otherwise they might withhold it, for the trail was dangerously close to the forbidden grounds of the Nascaupees, and anyway it was a risky undertaking for a boy—one that many of the experienced trappers would shrink from.

The more Bob considered his plan with all its great possibilities, the more eager he became. He found himself calculating the number of pelts he would secure, and amongst them perhaps a silver fox. He would let the mail boat doctor sell them for him, and then they would be rich, and Emily would go to the hospital, and be his merry, laughing little chum again. How happy they would all be! Bob was young and an optimist, and no thought of failure entered his head.

It was too late the night they reached home to see Douglas but the next morning he hurried through his breakfast, which was eaten by candlelight, and at break of day was off for Kenemish, where Douglas Campbell lived. He found the old man at home, and, with some fear of refusal, but still bravely, for he knew the kind-hearted old trapper would grant the request if he thought it were wise, explained his plan.

"You're a stalwart lad, Bob," said Douglas, looking at the boy critically from under his shaggy eyebrows. "An' how old may you be now? I 'most forgets—young folks grows up so fast."

"Just turned sixteen, sir."

"An' that's a young age for a lad to be so far in th' bush alone. But you'll be havin' somethin' happen t' you."

"I'll be rare careful, sir, an' you lets me ha' th' trail."

"An' what says your father?"

"I's said nothin' to he, sir, about it yet."

"Well, go ask he, an' he says yes, meet me at the post th' evenin' an' I'll speak wi' Mr. MacDonald t' give ye debt for your grub. Micmac John 's wantin' th' trail, but I'm not thinkin' t' let he have un."

At first Bob's parents both opposed the project. The dangers were so great that his mother asserted that if he were to go she would not have an easy hour until she saw her boy again. But he put forth such strong arguments and plead so vigorously, and his disappointment was so manifest, that finally she withdrew her objections and his father said:

"Bob jumped out with the painter in his hand"

"Well, you may go, my son, an Douglas lets you have th' trail."

So Bob, scarcely sixteen years of age, was to do a man's work and shoulder a man's burden, and he was glad that God had given him stature beyond his years, that he might do it. He could not remember when he had not driven dogs and cut wood and used a gun. He had done these things always. But now he was to rise to the higher plane of a full-fledged trapper and the spruce forest and the distant hills beyond the post seemed a great empire over which he was to rule. Those trackless fastnesses, with their wealth of fur, were to pay tribute to him, and he was happy in the thought that he had found a way to save little Emily from the lifelong existence of a poor crippled invalid. His buoyant spirit had stepped out of the old world of darkness and despair into a new world filled with light and love and beauty, in which the present troubles were but a passing cloud.

"Ho, lad! so your father let ye come. I's glad t' see ye, lad. An' now we're t' make a great hunt," greeted Douglas when the punt ground its nose upon the sandy beach, and Bob jumped out with the painter in his hand to make it fast

"Aye, sir," said Bob, "he an' mother says I may go."

"Well, come, b'y, an' we'll ha' supper an' bide here th' night an' in th' mornin' you'll get your fit out," said Douglas when they had pulled the punt up well away from the tide.

Entering the kitchen they found the others still at table. Greetings were exchanged, and a place was made for Douglas and Bob.

It was a good-sized room, furnished in the simple, primitive style of the country: an uncarpeted floor, benches and chests in lieu of chairs, a home-made table, a few shelves for the dishes, two or three bunks like ship bunks built in the end opposite the door to serve the post servant and his family for beds, and a big box stove, capable of taking huge billets of wood, crackling cheerily, for the nights were already frosty. Resting upon crosspieces nailed to the rough beams overhead were half a dozen muzzle loading guns, and some dog harness hung on the wall at one side. Everything was spotlessly clean. The floor, the table—innocent of a cloth—the shelves, benches and chests were scoured to immaculate whiteness with sand and soap, and, despite its meagre furnishings the room was

very snug and cozy and possessed an atmosphere of homeliness and comfort.

A single window admitted the fading evening light and a candle was brought, though Douglas said to the young girl who placed it in the centre of the table :

"So long as there's plenty a' grub, Bessie, I thinks we can find a way t' get he t' our mouths without ere a light."

The meal was a simple one—boiled fresh trout with pork grease to pour over it for sauce, bread, tea, and molasses for "sweetening." Butter and sugar were luxuries to be used only upon rare festal occasions.

After the men had eaten they sat on the floor with their backs against the rough board wall and their knees drawn up, and smoked and chatted about the fishing season just closed and the furring season soon to open, while Margaret Black, wife of Tom Black, the post servant, their daughter Bessie and a couple of young girl visitors of Bessie's from down the bay, ate and afterwards cleared the table. Then some one proposed a dance, as it was their last gathering before going to their winter trails, which would hold them prisoners for months to come in the interior

wilderness. A fiddle was brought out, and Dick Blake tuned up its squeaky strings, and, keeping time with one foot, struck up the Virginia reel.

The men discarded their jackets, displaying their rough flannel shirts and belts, in which were carried sheath knives, chose their partners and went at it with a will, to Dick's music, while he fiddled and shouted such directions as "Sashay down th' middle,—swing yer pardners,—promenade."

Bob led out Bessie, for whom he had always shown a decided preference, and danced like any man of them. Douglas did not dance—not because he was too old, for no man is too old to dance in Labrador, nor because it was beneath his dignity—but because, as he said: "There's not enough maids for all th' lads, an' I's had my turn a many a time. I'll smoke an' look on."

Neither did Micmac John dance, for he seemed in ill humour, and was silent and morose, nursing his discontent that a mere boy should have been given the Big Hill trail in preference to him, and he sat moody and silent, taking no apparent interest in the fun. The dance was nearly finished when Bob, wheeling around the end, warm with the excitement and pleasure of it all, inadvertently stepped on one of the half-breed's

feet. Micmac John rose like a flash and struck Bob a stinging blow on the face. Bob turned upon him full of the quick anger of the moment, then, remembering his surroundings, restrained the hand that was about to return the blow, simply saying:

"'Twas an accident, John, an' you has no right to strike me."

The half-breed, vicious, sinister and alert, stood glowering for a moment, then deliberately hit Bob again. The others fell back, Bob faced his opponent, and, goaded now beyond the power of self-restraint, struck with all the power of his young arm at Micmac John. The latter was on his guard, however, and warded the blow. Quick as a flash he drew his knife, and before the others realized what he was about to do, made a vicious lunge at Bob's breast.

II

OFF TO THE BUSH

ON the left breast of Bob's woollen shirt there was a pocket, and in this pocket was a small metal box of gun caps, which Bob always carried there when he was away from home, for he seldom left home without his gun. It was fortunate for him that it was there now, for the point of the knife struck squarely over the place where the box lay. It was driven with such force by the half-breed's strong arm that it passed clear through the metal, which, however, so broke the blow that the steel scarcely scratched the skin beneath. Before another plunge could be made with the knife the men sprang in and seized Micmac John, who submitted at once without a struggle to the overpowering force, and permitted himself to be disarmed. Then he was released and stood back, sullen and defiant. For several moments not a word was spoken.

Finally Dick Blake took a threatening step towards the Indian, and shaking his fist in the latter's face exclaimed:

"Ye dirty coward! Ye'd do murder, would ye? Ye'd kill un, would ye?"

"Hold on," said Douglas, "'bide a bit. 'Twill do no good t' beat un, though he's deservin' of it." Then to the half-breed: "An' what's ailin' of ye th' evenin', John? 'Twas handy t' doin' murder ye were."

John saw the angry look in the men's eyes, and the cool judgment of Douglas standing betweer him and bodily harm, and deciding that tact was the better part of valour, changed his attitude of defiance to one of reconciliation. He could not take revenge now for his fancied wrong. His Indian cunning told him to wait for a better time. So he extended his hand to Bob, who, dazed by the suddenness of the unexpected attack, had not moved. "Shake hands, Bob, an' call it square. I was hot with anger an' didn't know what I was doin'. We won't quarrel."

Bob, acting upon the motto his mother had taught him—"Be slow to anger and quick to forgive," took the outstretched hand with the remark,

"'Twere a mighty kick I gave ye, John, an' enough t' anger ye, an' no harm's done."

Big Dick Blake would not have it so at first and invited the half-breed outside to take a "licking" at his hands. But the others soon pacified him, the trouble was forgotten and dancing resumed as though nothing had happened to disturb it.

As soon as attention was drawn from him Micmac John, unobserved, slipped out of the door and a few moments later placed some things in a canoe that had been turned over on the beach, launched it and paddled away in the ghostly light of the rising moon.

The dancing continued until eleven o'clock, then the men lit their pipes, and after a short smoke and chat rolled into their blankets upon the floor, Mrs. Black and the girls retired to the bunks, and, save for a long, weird howl that now and again came from the wolf dogs outside, and the cheery crackling of the stove within, not a sound disturbed the silence of the night.

As has been intimated, Douglas Campbell was a man of importance in Eskimo Bay. When a young fellow he had come here from the Orkney Islands as a servant of the Hudson's Bay Com-

pany. A few years later he married a native girl, and then left the company's service to become a hunter.

He had been careful of his wages, and as he blazed new hunting trails into the wilderness, used his savings to purchase steel traps with which to stock the trails. Other trappers, too poor to buy traps for themselves, were glad to hunt on shares the trails Douglas made, and now he was reaping a good income from them. He was in fact the richest man in the Bay.

He was kind, generous and fatherly. The people of the Bay looked up to him and came to him when they were in trouble, for his advice and help. Many a poor family had Douglas Campbell's flour barrel saved from starvation in a bad winter, and God knows bad winters come often enough on the Labrador. Many an ambitious youngster had he started in life, as he was starting Bob Gray now.

The Big Hill trail, far up the Grand River, was the newest and deepest in the wilderness of all the trails Douglas owned—deeper in the wilderness than that of any other hunter. Just below it and adjoining it was William Campbell's—a son of Douglas—a young man of nineteen who

had made his first winter's hunt the year before our story begins; below that, Dick Blake's, and below Dick's was Ed Matheson's.

In preparing for the winter hunt it was more convenient for these men to take their supplies to their tilts by boat up the Grand River than to haul them in on toboggans on the spring ice, as nearly every other hunter, whose trapping ground was not upon so good a waterway, was compelled to do, and so it was that they were now at the trading post selecting their outfits preparatory to starting inland before the very cold winter should bind the river in its icy shackles.

The men were up early in the morning, and Douglas went with Bob to the office of Mr. Charles McDonald, the factor, where it was arranged that Bob should be given on credit such provisions and goods as he needed for his winter's hunt, to be paid for with fur when he returned in the spring. Douglas gave his verbal promise to assume the debt should Bob's catch of fur be insufficient to enable him to pay it, but Bob's reputation for energy and honesty was so good that Mr. McDonald said he had no fear as to the payment by the lad himself.

The provisions that Bob selected in the store

or shop, as they called it, were chiefly flour, a small bag of hardtack, fat pork, tea, molasses, baking soda and a little coarse salt, while powder, shot, bullets, gun caps, matches, a small axe and clothing completed the outfit. He already had a gray cotton wedge-tent. When these things were selected and put aside, Douglas bought a pipe and some plugs of black tobacco, and presented them to Bob as a gift from himself.

"But I never smokes, sir, an' I 'lows he'd be makin' me sick," said Bob, as he fingered the pipe.

"Just a wee bit when you tries t' get acquainted," answered Douglas with a chuckle, "just a wee bit; but ye'll come t' he soon enough an' right good company ye'll find he of a long evenin'. Take un along, an' there's no harm done if ye don't smoke un—but ye'll be makin' good friends wi' un soon enough."

So Bob pocketed the pipe and packed the tobacco carefully away with his purchases.

After a consultation it was decided that the men should all meet the next evening, which would be Sunday, at Bob's home at Wolf Bight, near the mouth of the Grand River, and from there make an early start on Monday morning

for their trapping grounds. "I'll have William over wi' one o' my boats that's big enough for all hands," said Douglas. "No use takin' more'n one boat. It's easier workin' one than two over the portages an' up the rapids."

When Bob's punt was loaded and he was ready to start for home, he ran to the kitchen to say good-bye to Mrs. Black and the girls, for he was not to see them again for many months.

"Bide in th' tilt when it storms, Bob, an' have a care for the wolves, an' keep clear o' th' Nascaupees," warned Bessie as she shook Bob's hand.

"Aye," said he. "I'll bide in th' tilt o' stormy days, an' not go handy t' th' Nascaupees. I'm not fearful o' th' wolves, for they's always so afraid they never gives un a chance for a shot."

"But *do* have a care, Bob. An'—an'—I wants to tell you how glad I is o' your good luck, an' I hopes you'll make a grand hunt—I *knows* you will. An'—Bob, we'll miss you th' winter."

"Thank you, Bessie. An' I'll think o' th' fine time I'm missin' at Christmas an' th' New Year Good-bye, Bessie."

"Good-bye, Bob."

The fifteen miles across the Bay to Wolf Bight

with a fair wind was soon run. Bob ate a late dinner, and then made everything snug for the journey. His flour was put into small, convenient sacks, his cooking utensils consisting of a frying pan, a tin pail in which to make tea, a tin cup and a spoon were placed in a canvas bag by themselves, and in another bag was packed a Hudson's Bay Company four-point blanket, two suits of underwear, a pair of buckskin mittens with a pair of duffel ones inside them, and an extra piece of the duffel for an emergency, six pairs of knit woollen socks, four pairs of duffel socks or slippers (which his mother had made for him out of heavy blanket-like woollen cloth), three pairs of buckskin moccasins for the winter and an extra pair of sealskin boots (long legged moccasins) for wet weather in the spring.

He also laid aside, for daily use on the journey, an adikey made of heavy white woollen cloth, with a fur trimmed hood, and a lighter one, to be worn outside of the other, and made of gray cotton. The adikey or "dikey," as Bob called it, was a seamless garment to be drawn on over the head and worn instead of a coat. The underclothing and knit socks had been purchased at the trading post, but every other article of

clothing, including boots, moccasins and mitts, his mother had made.

A pair of snow-shoes, a file for sharpening axes, a "wedge" tent of gray cotton cloth and a sheet iron tent stove about twelve inches square and eighteen inches long with a few lengths of pipe placed inside of it were likewise put in readiness. The stove and pipe Bob's father had manufactured.

No packing was left to be done Sunday, for though there was no church to go to, the Grays, and for that matter all of the Bay people, were close observers of the Sabbath, and left no work to be done on that day that could be done at any other time.

Early on Sunday evening, Dick and Ed and Bill Campbell came over in their boat from Kenemish, where they had spent the previous night. It had been a short day for Bob, the shortest it seemed to him he had ever known, for though he was anxious to be away and try his mettle with the wilderness, these were the last hours for many long weary months that he should have at home with his father and mother and Emily. How the child clung to him! She kept him by her side the livelong day, and held his hand as though she were afraid that he would slip away from her

She stroked his cheek and told him how proud she was of her big brother, and warned him over and over again,

"Now, Bob, do be wonderful careful an' not go handy t' th' Nascaupees for they be dreadful men, fierce an' murderous."

Over and over again they planned the great things they would do when he came back with a big lot of fur—as they were both quite sure he would—and how she would go away to the doctor's to be made well and strong again as she used to be and the romps they were to have when that happy time came.

"An' Bob," said Emily, "every night before I goes to sleep when I says my 'Now I lay me down to sleep' prayer, I'll say to God 'an' keep Bob out o' danger an' bring he home safe.'"

"Aye, Emily," answered Bob, "an' I'll say to God, 'Make Emily fine an' strong again.'"

Before daybreak on Monday morning breakfast was eaten, and the boat loaded for a start at dawn. Emily was not yet awake when the time came to say farewell and Bob kissed her as she slept. Poor Mrs. Gray could not restrain the tears, and Bob felt a great choking in his throat —but he swallowed it bravely.

"Don't be feelin' bad, mother. I'm t' be rare careful in th' bush, and you'll see me well and hearty wi' a fine hunt, wi' th' open water," said he, as he kissed her.

"I knows you'll be careful, an' I'll try not t' worry, but I has a forebodin' o' somethin' t' happen—somethin' that's t' happen t' you, Bob—oh, I feels that somethin's t' happen. Emily 'll be missin' you dreadful, Bob. An'—'twill be sore lonesome for your father an' me without our boy."

"Ready, Bob!" shouted Dick from the boat.

"Don't forget your prayers, lad, an' remember that your mother's prayin' for you every mornin' an' every night."

"Yes, mother, I'll remember all you said."

She watched him from the door as he walked down to the shore with his father, and the boat, heavily laden, pushed out into the Bay, and she watched still, until it disappeared around the point, above. Then she turned back into the room and had a good cry before she went about her work again.

If she had known what those distant hills held for her boy—if her intuition had been knowledge—she would never have let him go.

III

AN ADVENTURE WITH A BEAR

THE boat turned out into the broad channel and into Goose Bay. There was little or no wind, and when the sun broke gloriously over the white-capped peaks of the Mealy Mountains it shone upon a sea as smooth as a mill pond, with scarcely a ripple to disturb it. The men worked laboriously and silently at their oars. A harbour seal pushed its head above the water, looked at the toiling men curiously for a moment, then disappeared below the surface, leaving an eddy where it had been. Gulls soared overhead, their white wings and bodies looking very pure and beautiful in the sunlight. High in the air a flock of ducks passed to the southward. From somewhere in the distance came the honk of a wild goose. The air was laden with the scent of the great forest of spruce and balsam fir, whose dark green barrier came down from the rock-bound, hazy hills in the distance to the very water's edge, where tamarack groves, turned

yellow by the early frosts, reflected the sunlight like settings of rich gold.

"'Tis fine! 'tis grand!" exclaimed Bob at last, as he rested a moment on his oars to drink in the scene and breathe deeply the rare, fragrant atmosphere. "'Tis sure a fine world we're in."

"Aye, 'tis fine enough now," remarked Ed, stopping to cut pieces from a plug of tobacco, and then cramming them into his pipe. "But," he continued, prophetically, as he struck a match and held it between his hands for the sulphur to burn off, "bide a bit, an' you'll find it ugly enough when th' snows blow t' smother ye, an' yer racquets sink with ye t' yer knees, and th' frost freezes yer face and the ice sticks t' yer very eyelashes until ye can't see—then," continued he, puffing vigorously at his pipe, "then 'tis a sorry world—aye, a sorry an' a hard world for folks t' make a livin' in."

It was mid-forenoon when they reached Rabbit Island—a small wooded island where the passing dog drivers always stop in winter to make tea and snatch a mouthful of hard biscuit while the dogs have a half hour's rest.

"An' here we'll boil th' kettle," suggested

Dick. "I'm fair starved with an early breakfast and the pull at the oars."

"We're ready enough for that," assented Bill "Th' wind's prickin' up a bit from th' east'rd, an' when we starts I thinks we may hoist the sails."

"Yes, th' wind's prickin' up an' we'll have a fair breeze t' help us past th' Traverspine, I hopes."

The landing was made. Bob and Ed each took an axe to cut into suitable lengths some of the plentiful dead wood lying right to hand, while Dick whittled some shavings and started the fire. Bill brought a kettle (a tin pail) of water. Then he cut a green sapling about five feet in length, sharpened one end of it, and stuck it firmly into the earth, slanting the upper end into position over the fire. On this he hung the kettle of water, so that the blaze shot up around it. In a little while the water boiled, and with a stick for a lifter he set it on the ground and threw in a handful of tea. This they sweetened with molasses and drank out of tin cups while they munched hardtack.

Bill's prophecy as to the wind proved a true one, and in the half hour while they were at their

luncheon so good a breeze had sprung up that when they left Rabbit Island both sails were hoisted.

Early in the afternoon they passed the Traverspine River, and now with some current to oppose made slower, though with the fair wind, good progress, and when the sun dipped behind the western hills and they halted to make their night camp they were ten miles above the Traverspine.

To men accustomed to travelling in the bush, camp is quickly made. The country here was well wooded, and the forest beneath covered with a thick carpet of white moss. Bob and Bill selected two trees between which they stretched the ridge pole of a tent, and a few moments sufficed to cut pegs and pin down the canvas. Then spruce boughs were broken and spread over the damp moss and their shelter was ready for occupancy. Meanwhile Ed had cut firewood while Dick started the fire, using for kindlings a handful of dry, dead sprigs from the branches of a spruce tree, and by the time Bob and Bill had the tent pitched it was blazing cheerily, and the appetizing smell of fried pork and hot tea was in the air. When supper was

cooked Ed threw on some more sticks, for the evening was frosty, and then they sat down to luxuriate in its genial warmth and eat their simple meal.

For an hour they chatted, while the fire burned low, casting a narrowing circle of light upon the black wilderness surrounding the little camp. Some wild thing of the forest stole noiselessly to the edge of the outer darkness, its eyes shining like two balls of fire, then it quietly slunk away unobserved. Above the fir tops the blue dome of heaven seemed very near and the million stars that glittered there almost close enough to pluck from their azure setting. With a weird, uncanny light the aurora flashed its changing colours restlessly across the sky. No sound save the low voices of the men as they talked, disturbed the great silence of the wilderness.

Many a time had Bob camped and hunted with his father near the coast, in the forest to the south of Wolf Bight, but he had never been far from home and with this his first long journey into the interior, a new world and new life were opening to him. The solitude had never impressed him before as it did now. The smoke

of the camp-fire and the perfume of the forest had never smelled so sweet. The romance of the trail was working its way into his soul, and to him the land seemed filled with wonderful things that he was to search out and uncover for himself. The harrowing tales that the men were telling of winter storms and narrow escapes from wild animals had no terror for him. He only looked forward to meeting and conquering these obstacles for himself. Young blood loves adventure, and Bob's blood was strong and red and active.

When the fire died away and only a heap of glowing red coals remained, Dick knocked the ashes from his pipe, and rising with a yawn, suggested:

"I 'lows it's time t' turn in. We'll have t' be movin' early in th' mornin' an' we makes th' Muskrat Portage."

Then they went to the tent and rolled into their blankets and were soon sleeping as only men can sleep who breathe the pure, free air of God's great out-of-doors.

Before noon the next day they reached the Muskrat Falls, where the torrent, with a great roar, pours down seventy feet over the solid

rocks. An Indian portage trail leads around the falls and meets the river again half a mile farther up. At its beginning it ascends a steep incline two hundred feet, then it runs away, comparatively level, to its upper end where it drops abruptly to the water's edge. To pull a heavy boat up this incline and over the half mile to the launching place above, was no small undertaking.

Everything was unloaded, the craft brought ashore, and ropes which were carried for the purpose attached to the bow. Then round sticks of wood, for rollers, were placed under it, and while Dick and Ed hauled, Bob and Bill pushed and lifted and kept the rollers straight. In this manner, with infinite labour, it was worked to the top of the hill and step by step hauled over the portage to the place where it was to enter the water again. It was nearly sunset when they completed their task and turned back to bring up their things from below.

They had retraced their steps but a few yards when Dick, who was ahead, darted off to the left of the trail with the exclamation:

"An' here's some fresh meat for supper."

It was a porcupine lumbering awkwardly away. He easily killed it with a stick, and pick-

ing it up by its tail, was about to turn back into the trail when a fresh axe cutting caught his eye.

"Now who's been here, lads?" said he, looking at it closely. "None o' th' planters has been inside of th' Traverspine, an' no Mountaineers has left th' post yet."

The others joined him and scrutinized the cutting, then looked for other human signs. Near by they found the charred wood of a recent fire and some spruce boughs that had served for a bed within a day or two, which was proved by their freshly broken ends. It had been the couch of a single man.

"Micmac John, sure!" said Ed.

"An' what's he doin' here?" asked Bill. "He has no traps or huntin' grounds handy t' this."

"I'm thinkin' 'tis no good he's after," said Dick. "'Tis sure he, an' he'll be givin' us trouble, stealin' our fur an' maybe worse. But if *I* gets hold o' he, he'll be sorry for his meddlin', if meddlin' he's after, an' it's sure all he's here for."

They hurried back to pitch camp, and when the fire was made the porcupine was thrown upon the blaze, and allowed to remain there until its quills and hair were scorched to a cinder.

Then Dick, who superintended the cooking, pulled it out, scraped it and dressed it. On either side of the fire he drove a stake and across the tops of these stakes tied a cross pole. From the centre of this pole the porcupine was suspended by a string, so that it hung low and near enough to the fire to roast nicely, while it was twirled around on the string. It was soon sending out a delicious odour, and in an hour was quite done, and ready to be served. A dainty morsel it was to the hungry voyageurs, resembling in some respects roast pig, and every scrap of it they devoured.

The next morning all the goods were carried over the portage, and a wearisome fight began against the current of the river, which was so swift above this point as to preclude sailing or even rowing. A rope was tied to the bow of the boat and on this three of the men hauled, while the other stood in the craft and with a pole kept it clear of rocks and other obstructions. For several days this method of travel continued—tracking it is called. Sometimes the men were forced along the sides of almost perpendicular banks, often they waded in the water and frequently met obstacles like projecting cliffs,

around which they passed with the greatest difficulty.

At the Porcupine Rapids everything was lashed securely into the boat, as a precaution in case of accident, but they overcame the rapid without mishap, and finally they reached Gull Island Lake, a broadening of the river in safety, and were able to resume their oars again. It was a great relief after the long siege of tracking, and Ed voiced the feelings of all in the remark:

"Pullin' at th' oars is hard when ye has nothin' harder t' do, but trackin's so much harder, pullin' seems easy alongside un."

"Aye," said Dick, "th' thing a man's doin's always the hardest work un ever done. 'Tis because ye forgets how hard th' things is that ye've done afore."

"An' it's just the same in winter. When a frosty spell comes folks thinks 'tis th' frostiest time they ever knew. If '*twere*, th' winters, I 'lows'd be gettin' so cold folks couldn't stand un. I recollects one frosty spell ——"

"Now none o' yer yarns, Ed. Th' Lord'll be strikin' ye dead in His anger *some day* when ye're tellin' what ain't so."

"I tells no yarns as ain't so, an' I can prove

un all—leastways I could a proved this un, only it so happens as I were alone. As I was sayin', 'twere so cold one night last winter that when I was boilin' o' my kettle an' left th' door o' th' tilt open for a bit while I steps outside, th' wind blowin' in on th' kettle all th' time hits th' steam at th' spout—an' what does ye think I sees when I comes in?"

"Ye sees steam, o' course, an' what else could ye see, now?"

"'Twere so cold—that wind—blowin' right on th' spout where th' steam comes out, when I comes in I looks an' I can't believe what I sees myself. Well, now, I sees th' steam froze solid, an' a string o' ice hangin' from th' spout right down t' th' floor o' th' tilt, an' th' kettle boilin' merry all th' time. That's what I sees, an' ——"

"Now stop yer lyin', Ed. Ye knows no un ——"

"A bear! A bear!" interrupted Bob, excitedly. "See un! See un there comin' straight to that rock!"

Sure enough, a couple of hundred yards away a big black bear was lumbering right down towards them, and if it kept its course would pass a large boulder standing some fifty yards

back from the river bank. The animal had not seen the boat nor scented the men, for the wind was blowing from it towards them.

"Run her in here," said Bob, indicating a bit of bank out of the bear's range of vision, "an' let me ashore t' have a chance at un."

The instant the boat touched, land he grabbed his gun—a single-barrelled, muzzle loader—bounded noiselessly ashore, and stooping low gained the shelter of the boulder unobserved.

The unsuspecting bear came leisurely on, bent, no doubt, upon securing a drink of water to wash down a feast of blueberries of which it had just partaken, and seemingly occupied by the pleasant reveries that follow a good meal and go with a full stomach. Bob could hear it coming now, and raised his gun ready to give it the load the moment it passed the rock. Then, suddenly, he remembered that he had loaded the gun that morning with shot, when hunting a flock of partridges, and had failed to reload with ball. To kill a bear with a partridge load of shot was out of the question, and to wound the bear at close quarters was dangerous, for a wounded bear with its enemy within reach is pretty sure to retaliate.

Just at the instant this thought flashed through Bob's mind the big black side of the bear appeared not ten feet from the muzzle of his gun, and before the lad realized it he had pulled the trigger.

Bob did not stop to see the result of the shot, but ran at full speed towards the boat. The bear gave an angry growl, and for a moment bit at the wound in its side, then in a rage took after him.

It was not over fifty yards to the boat, and though Bob had a few seconds the start, the bear seemed likely to catch him before he could reach it, for clumsy though they are in appearance, they are fast travellers when occasion demands. Half the distance was covered in a jiffy, but the bear was almost at his heels. A few more leaps and he would be within reach of safety. He could fairly feel the bear's breath. Then his foot caught a projecting branch and he fell at full length directly in front of the infuriated animal.

IV

SWEPT AWAY IN THE RAPIDS

WHEN Bob went ashore Dick followed as far as a clump of bushes at the top of the bank below which the boat was concealed, and crouching there witnessed Bob's flight from the bear, and was very close to him when he fell. Dick had already drawn a bead on the animal's head, and just at the moment Bob stumbled fired. The bear made one blind strike with his paw and then fell forward, its momentum sending it upon Bob's sprawling legs Dick laughed uproariously at the boy as he extricated himself.

"Well, now," he roared, "'twere as fine a race as I ever see—as I *ever* see—an' ye were handy t' winnin' but for th' tumble. A rare fine race."

Bob was rather shamefaced, for an old hunter would scarcely have forgotten himself to such an extent as to go bear hunting with a partridge load in his gun, and he did not like to be laughed at.

"Anyhow," said he, "I let un have un first. An' I led un down where you could shoot un. An' he's a good fat un," he commented kicking the carcass.

Ed and Bill had arrived now and all hands went to work at once skinning the bear.

"Speakin' o' bein' chased by bears," remarked Ed as they worked, "onct I were chased pretty hard myself an' that time I come handy t' bein' done for sure enough."

"An' how were that?" asked Bob.

"'Twere one winter an' I were tendin' my trail. I stops at noon t' boil th' kettle, an' just has th' fire goin' fine an' th' water over when all t' a sudden I hears a noise behind me and turnin' sees a black bear right handy t' me—th' biggest black bear I ever seen—an' makin' fer me. I jumps up an' grabs my gun an' lets un have it, but wi' th' suddenness on it I misses, an' away I starts an' 'twere lucky I has my racquets on."

"Were this in *winter?*" asked Dick.

"It *were* in winter."

"Th' bears as *I* knows don't travel in winter. They sleeps then, leastways all but white bears."

"Well, this were in winter an' this bear weren't sleepin' much. As I was sayin'——"

"An' he took after ye without bein' provoked?"

"An' he did an' right smart."

"Well he *were* a queer bear—a *queer* un—th' *queerest* I ever hear tell about. Awake in *winter* an' takin' after folks without bein' *provoked*. 'Tis th' first black bear *I* ever heard tell about that done that. I knows bears pretty well an' they alus takes tother way about as fast as their legs 'll carry un."

"Now, if you wants me t' tell about this bear ye'll ha' t' stop interruptin'."

"No one said as they wanted ye to."

"Now I'm goin' t' tell un whatever.

"As I were sayin', th' bear he takes after me wi' his best licks an' I takes off an' tries t' load my gun as I runs. I drops in a han'ful o' powder an' then finds I gone an' left my ball pouch at th' fire. It were pretty hard runnin' wi' my racquets sinkin' in th' snow, which were new an' soft an' I were losin' ground an' gettin' winded an' 'twere lookin' like un's goin' t' cotch me sure. All t' onct I see a place where the snow's drifted up three fathoms deep agin a ledge an' even wi' th' top of un I makes for un an' runs right over th' upper side an' th' bear he comes too, but he

has no racquets and th' snow's soft, bein' fresh drift an' down he goes sinkin' most out o' sight an' th' more un wallers th' worse off un is."

"An' what does you do?" asks Bob.

"What does I do? I stops an' laughs at un a bit. Then I lashes my sheath knife on th' end o' a pole spear-like, an' sticks th' bear back o' th' fore leg an' kills un, an' then I has bear's meat wi' my tea, an' in th' spring gets four dollars from th' company for the skin."

In twenty minutes they had the pelt removed from the bear and Dick generously insisted upon Bob taking it as the first-fruits of his inland hunt, saying: "Ye earned he wi' yer runnin'."

The best of the meat was cut from the carcass, and that night thick, luscious steaks were broiled for supper, and the remainder packed for future use on the journey.

Fine weather had attended the voyageurs thus far but that night the sky clouded heavily and when they emerged from the tent the next morning a thick blanket of snow covered the earth and weighted down the branches of the spruce trees. The storm had spent itself in the night, however, and the day was clear and sparkling. Very beautiful the white world looked when the sur

came to light it up; but the snow made tracking less easy, and warned the travellers that no time must be lost in reaching their destination, for it was a harbinger of the winter blasts and blizzards soon to blow.

Early that afternoon they came in view of the rushing waters of the Gull Island Rapids, with their big foam crested waves angrily assailing the rocks that here and there raised their ominous heads above the torrent. The greater length of these rapids can be tracked, with some short portages around the worst places. Before entering them everything was lashed securely into the boat, as at the Porcupine Rapids, and the tracking line fastened a few inches back of the bow leaving enough loose end to run to the stern and this was tied securely there to relieve the unusual strain on the bow fastening. Ed took the position of steersman in the boat, while the other three were to haul upon the line.

When all was made ready and secure, they started forward, bringing the craft into the heavy water, which opposed its progress so vigorously that it seemed as though the rope must surely snap. Stronger and stronger became the strain and harder and harder pulled the men. All of

Ed's skill was required to keep the boat straight in the treacherous cross current eddies where the water swept down past the half-hidden rocks in the river bed.

They were pushing on tediously but surely when suddenly and without warning the fastening at the bow broke loose, the boat swung away into the foam, and in a moment was swallowed up beneath the waves. The rear fastening held however and the boat was thrown in against the bank.

But Ed had disappeared in the fearful flood of rushing white water. The other three stood appalled. It seemed to them that no power on earth could save him. He must certainly be dashed to death upon the rocks or smothered beneath the onrushing foam.

For a moment all were inert, paralyzed. Then Dick, accustomed to act quickly in every emergency, slung the line around a boulder, took a half hitch to secure it and, without stopping to see whether it would hold or not, ran down stream at top speed with Bob and Bill at his heels.

V

THE TRAILS ARE REACHED

ED had been cast away in rapids before and when he found himself in the water, with the wilderness traveller's quick appreciation of the conditions, he lay limp, without a struggle. If he permitted the current to carry him in its own way on its course, he might be swept past the rocks uninjured to the still water below. If one struggle was made it might throw him out of the current's course against a boulder, where he would be pounded to death or rendered unconscious and surely drowned. He was swept on much more rapidly than his companions could run and quite hidden from them by the big foam-crested waves.

It seemed ages to the helpless man before he felt his speed slacken and finally found himself in the eddy where they had begun to track. Here he struck out for the river bank only a few yards distant, and, half drowned, succeeded in pulling himself ashore. A few minutes later, when the others came running

down, they found him, to their great relief, sitting on the bank quite safe, wringing the water from his clothing, and their fear that he was injured was quickly dispelled by his looking up as they approached and remarking, as though nothing unusual had occurred,

"Bathin's chilly this time o' year. Let's put on a fire an' boil th'kettle."

"I don't know as we got a kettle or anythin' else," said Dick, laughing at Ed's bedraggled appearance and matter-of-fact manner. "We better go back an' see. I hitched th' trackin' line to a rock, but I don't know's she's held."

"Well, let's look. I'm a bit damp, an' thinkin' I wants a fire, whatever."

A cold northwest wind had sprung up in the afternoon and the snow was drifting unpleasantly and before the boat was reached Ed's wet garments were frozen stiff as a coat of mail and he was so chilled through that he could scarcely walk. The line had held and they found the boat in an eddy below a high big boulder. It was submerged, but quite safe, with everything, thanks to the careful lashings, in its place, save a shoulder of bear's meat that had loosened and washed away.

"I thinks, lads, we'll be makin' camp here Whilst I puts a fire on an' boils th' kettle t' warm Ed up, you pitch camp. 'Twill be nigh sundown afore Ed gets dried out, an' too late t' go any farther," suggested Dick.

In a few minutes the fire was roaring and Ed thawing out and drinking hot tea as he basked in the blaze, while Dick chopped fire-wood and Bob and Bill unloaded the boat and put up the tent and made it snug for the night.

Heretofore they had found the outside camp-fire quite sufficient for their needs, and had not gone to the trouble of setting up the stove, but it was yet some time before dark, and as the wet clothing and outfit could be much more easily and quickly dried under the shelter of the heated tent than in the drifting snow by the open fire, it was decided to put the stove in use on this occasion. Bob selected a flat stone upon which to rest it, for without this protection the moss beneath, coming into contact with the hot metal, would have dried quickly and taken fire.

When everything was brought in and distributed in the best place to dry, Bob took some birch bark, thrust it into the stove and lighted it. Instantly it flared up as though it had been oil

soaked. This made excellent kindling for the wood that was piled on top, and in an incredibly short time the tent was warm and snug as any house. Ed left the open fire and joined Bob and Bill, and in a few minutes Dick came in with an armful of wood.

"Well, un had a good wettin' an' a cold souse," said he, as he piled the wood neatly behind the stove, addressing himself to Ed, who, now quite recovered from his chill, stood with his back to the stove, puffing contentedly at his pipe, with the steam pouring out of his wet clothes.

"'Twere just a fine time wi' th' dip I had ten year ago th' winter comin'," said Ed, ruminatively. "'Twere *nothin'* to that un."

"An' where were that?" asked Dick.

"I were out o' tea in March, an' handy to havin' no tobaccy, an' I says t' myself, 'Ed, ye can't stay in th' bush till th' break up wi' nary a bit o' tea, and ye'd die wi'out tobaccy. Now ye got t' make th' cruise t' th' Post.' Well, I fixes up my traps, an' packs grub for a week on my flat sled (toboggan) an' off I goes. 'Twere fair goin' wi' good hard footin' an' I makes fine time Below th' Gull Rapids, just above where I come ashore th' day, I takes t' th' ice thinkin' un

good, an' 'twere lucky I has my racquets lashed on th' flat sled an' not walkin' wi' un, for I never could a swum wi' un on. Two fathoms from th' shore I steps on bad ice an' in I goes, head an' all, an' th' current snatches me off'n my feet an' carries me under th' ice, an' afore I knows un I finds th' water carryin' me along as fast as a deer when he gets th' wind."

"An' how did un get out?" asked Bob in open-mouthed wonder.

"'Twere sure a hard fix *under* th' ice," remarked Bill, equally interested.

"A wonderful hard fix, a *wonderful* hard fix, *under* th' ice, an' I were handy t' stayin' under un," said Ed, taking evident delight in keeping his auditors in suspense. "Aye, a *wonderful* hard fix," continued he, while he hacked pieces from his tobacco plug and filled his pipe.

"An' where were I?" asked Dick, making a quick calculation of past events. "I were huntin' wi' un ten year ago, an' I don't mind ye're gettin' in th' ice."

"'Twere th' winter un were laid up wi' th' lame leg, an' poor Frank Morgan were huntin along wi' me. Frank were lost th' same spring in th' Bay. Does un mind that?"

"'Twere only *nine* year ago I were laid up an' Frank were huntin' my trail," said Dick.

"Well, maybe 'twere only nine year; 'twere *nine* or *ten* year ago," Ed continued, with some show of impatience at Dick's questioning. "Leastways 'twere thereabouts. Well, I finds myself away off from th' hole I'd dropped into, an' no way o' findin' he. The river were low an' had settled a foot below th' ice, which were four or five feet thick over my head, an' no way o' cuttin' out. So what does I do?"

"An' what does un do?" asked Dick.

"What does I do? I keeps shallow water near th' shore an' holdin' my head betwixt ice an' water makes down t' th' Porcupine Rapids. Twere a long an' wearisome pull, an' thinks I, 'Tis too much—un's done for now.' After a time I sees light an' I goes for un. 'Twere a place near a rock where th' water swingin' around had kept th' ice thin. I gets t' un an' makes a footin' on th' rock. I gets out my knife an finds th' ice breaks easy, an' cuts a hole an' crawls out By th' time I gets on th' ice I were pretty handy t' givin' up wi' th' cold."

"'Twere a close call," assented Dick, as he puffed at his pipe meditatively.

"How far did un go under th' ice?" asked Bill, who had been much interested in the narrative.

"Handy t' two mile."

For several days after this the men worked very hard from early dawn until the evening darkness drove them into camp. The current was swift and the rapids great surging torrents of angry water that seemed bent upon driving them back. One after another the Horseshoe, the Ninipi, and finally, after much toil, the Mouni Rapids were met and conquered.

The weather was stormy and disagreeable. Nearly every day the air was filled with driving snow or beating cold rain that kept them wet to the skin and would have sapped the courage and broken the spirit of less determined men. But they did not mind it. It was the sort of thing they had been accustomed to all their life.

With each morning, Bob, full of the wilderness spirit, took up the work with as much enthusiasm as on the day he left Wolf Bight. At night when he was very tired and just a bit homesick, he would try to picture to himself the little cabin that now seemed far far away, and he would say to himself,

"If I could spend th' night there now, an' oe back here in th' mornin', 'twould be fine. But when I *does* go back, the goin' home'll be fine, an' pay for all th' bein' away. An' the Lard lets me, I'll have th' fur t' send Emily t' th' doctors an' make she well."

One day the clouds grew tired of sending forth snow and rain, and the wind forgot blow, and the waters became weary of their rushing. The morning broke clear and beautiful, and the sun, in a blaze of red and orange grandeur, displayed the world in all its rugged primeval beauty. The travellers had reached Lake Wonakapow, a widening of the river, where the waters were smooth and no current opposed their progress. For the first time in many days the sails were hoisted, and, released from the hard work, the men sat back to enjoy the rest, while a fair breeze sent them up the lake.

"'Tis fine t' have a spell from th' trackin'," remarked Ed as he lighted his pipe.

"Aye, 'tis that," assented Dick, "an' we been makin' rare good time wi' this bad weather. We're three days ahead o' my reckonin'."

How beautiful it was! The water, deep and

dark, leading far away, every rugged hill capped with snow, and the white peaks sparkling in the sunshine. A loon laughed at them as they passed, and an invisible wolf on a mountain side sent forth its long weird cry of defiance.

They sailed quietly on for an hour or two. Finally Ed pointed out to Bob a small log shack standing a few yards back from the shore, saying:

"An' there's my tilt. Here I leaves un."

Bill Campbell was at the tiller, and the boat was headed to a strip of sandy beach near the tilt. Presently they landed. Ed's things were separated from the others and taken ashore, and all hands helped him carry them up to the tilt.

There was no window in the shack and the doorway was not over four feet high. Within was a single room about six by eight feet in size, with a rude couch built of saplings, running along two sides, upon which spruce boughs, used the previous year and now dry and dead, were strewn for a bed. The floor was of earth. The tilt contained a sheet iron stove similar to the one Bob had brought, but no other furniture save a few cooking utensils. The round logs of which the rough building was constructed, were

Last Tilt
Marsh
Lake
Marsh
Big Hill Trail
Lake
River Tilt
Bluff Trail
Bluff Trail
The River
Lake Wanahapow
Ed's Trail
Tilts.
Trails.

well chinked between them with moss, making it snug and warm.

This was where Ed kept his base of supplies. His trail began here and ran inland and nearly northward for some distance to a lake whose shores it skirted, and then, taking a swing to the southwest, came back to the river again and ended where Dick's began, and the two trappers had a tilt there which they used in common Between these tilts were four others at intervals of twelve to fifteen miles, for night shelters, the distance between them constituting a day's work, the trail from end to end being about seventy miles long.

The trails which the other three were to hunt led off, one from the other—Dick's, Bill's and then the Big Hill trail, with tilts at the juncture points and along them in a similar manner to the arrangement of Ed's, and each trail covering about the same number of miles as his. Each man could therefore walk the length of his trail in five days, if the weather were good, and, starting from one end on Monday morning have a tilt to sleep in each night and reach his last tilt on the other end Friday night. This gave him Saturday in which to do odd jobs like mending

and Sunday for rest, before taking up the round again on Monday.

It was yet too early by three weeks to begin the actual trapping, but much in the way of preparation had to be done in the meantime This was Tuesday, and it was agreed that two weeks from the following Saturday Ed and Dick should be at the tilt where their trails met and Bill and Bob at the junction of their trails, ready to start their work on the next Monday. This would bring Dick and Bill together on the following Friday night and Bob and Ed would each be alone, one at either end of the series of trails and more than a hundred miles from his nearest neighbour.

"I hopes your first cruise'll be a good un, an' you'll be doin' fine th' winter, Bob. Have a care now for th' Nascaupees," said Ed as they shook hands at parting.

"Thanks," answered Bob, "an' I hopes you'll be havin' a fine hunt too."

Then they were off, and Ed's long winter's work began.

The next afternoon Dick's first tilt was reached, and a part of his provisions and some of Ed's that they had brought on for him, were

unloaded there. Dick, however, decided to go with the young men to the tilt at the beginning of the Big Hill trail, to help them haul the boat up and make it snug for the winter, saying, "I'm thinkin' you might find her too heavy, an' I'll go on an' give a hand, an' cut across to my trail, which I can do handy enough in a day, havin' no pack."

An hour before dark on Friday evening they reached the tilt. Dick was the first to enter it, and as he pushed open the door he stopped with the exclamation:

"That rascal Micmac!"

VI

ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS

THE stove and stovepipe were gone, and fresh, warm ashes on the floor gave conclusive proof that the theft had been perpetrated that very day. Some one had been occupying the tilt, too, as new boughs spread for a bed made evident.

"More o' Micmac John's work," commented Dick as he kicked the ashes. "He's been takin' th' stove an' he'll be takin' th' fur too, an' he gets a chance."

"Maybe 'twere Mountaineers," suggested Bill.

"No, 'twere no Mountaineers—*them* don't steal. No un ever heard o' a Mountaineer takin' things as belongs to *other* folks. *Injuns* be honest—leastways all but half-breeds."

"Nascaupees might a been here," offered Bob, having in mind the stories he had heard of them, and feeling now that he was almost amongst them.

"No, Nascaupees 'd have no use for a *stove* They'd ha' burned th' tilt. 'Tis Micmac John

an' he be here t' steal fur. 'Tis t' steal fur's what *he* be after. But let me ketch un, an' he won't steal much more fur," insisted Dick, worked up to a very wrathful pitch.

They looked outside for indications of the course the marauder had taken, and discovered that he had returned to the river, where his canoe had been launched a little way above the tilt, and had either crossed to the opposite side or gone higher up stream. In either case it was useless to attempt to follow him, as, if they caught him at all, it would be after a chase of several days, and they could not well afford the time. There was nothing to do, therefore, but make the best of it. Bob's tent stove was set up in place of the one that had been stolen. Then everything was stowed away in the tilt.

The next morning came cold and gray, with heavy, low-hanging clouds, threatening an early storm. The boat was hauled well up on the shore, and a log protection built over it to prevent the heavy snows that were soon to come from breaking it down.

Before noon the first flakes of the promised storm fell lazily to the earth and in half an hour it was coming so thickly that the river twenty

yards away could not be seen, and the wind was rising. The three cut a supply of dry wood and piled what they could in the tilt, placing the rest within reach of the door. Then armfuls of boughs were broken for their bed. All the time the storm was increasing in power and by nightfall a gale was blowing and a veritable blizzard raging.

When all was made secure, a good fire was started in the stove, a candle lighted, and some partridges that had been killed in the morning put over with a bit of pork to boil for supper. While these were cooking Bill mixed some flour with water, using baking soda for leaven—"risin'" he called it—into a dough which he formed into cakes as large in circumference as the pan would accommodate and a quarter of an inch thick. These cakes he fried in pork grease. This was the sort of bread that they were to eat through the winter.

The meal was a cozy one. Outside the wind shrieked angrily and swirled the snow in smothering clouds around the tilt, and rattled the stovepipe, threatening to shake it down. It was very pleasant to be out of it all in the snug, warm shack with the stove crackling contentedly and the place filled with the mingled odours of the

steaming kettle of partridges and tea and spruce boughs. To the hunters it seemed luxurious after their tedious fight against the swift river. Times like this bring ample recompense to the wilderness traveller for the most strenuous hardships that he is called upon to endure. The memory of one such night will make men forget a month of suffering. Herein lies one of the secret charms of the wilds.

When supper was finished Dick and Bill filled their pipes, and with coals from the stove lighted them. Then they lounged back and puffed with an air of such perfect, speechless bliss that for the first time in his life Bob felt a desire to smoke. He drew from his pocket the pipe Douglas had given him and filled it from a plug of the tobacco. When he reached for a firebrand to light it Dick noticed what he was doing and asked good naturedly,—

"Think t' smoke with us, eh?"

"Yes, thinks I'll try un."

"An' be gettin' sick before un knows it," volunteered Bill.

Disregarding the suggestion Bob fired his pipe and lay back with the air of an old veteran. He soon found that he did not like it very much, and

in a little while he felt a queer sensation in his stomach, but it was not in Bob's nature to acknowledge himself beaten so easily, and he puffed on doggedly. Pretty soon beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead and he grew white. Then he quietly laid aside the pipe and groped his way unsteadily out of doors, for he was very dizzy and faint. When he finally returned he was too sick to pay any attention to the banter of his companions, who unsympathetically made fun of him, and he lay down with the inward belief that smoking was not the pleasure it was said to be, and as for himself he would never touch a pipe again.

All day Sunday and Monday the storm blew with unabated fury and the three were held close prisoners in the tilt. On Monday night it cleared, and Tuesday morning came clear and rasping cold.

Long before daylight breakfast was eaten and preparations made for travelling. Bob lashed his tent, cooking utensils, some traps and a supply of provisions upon one of two toboggans that leaned against the tilt outside. The other one was for Bill when he should need it. Dick did up his blanket and a few provisions into

a light pack, new slings were adjusted to their snow-shoes and finally they were ready to strike the trails.

The steel-gray dawn was just showing when Dick shouldered his pack, took his axe and gun and shook hands with the boys.

"Good-bye Bob. Have a care o' nasty weather an' don't be losin' yourself. I'll see you in a fortnight, Bill. Good-bye."

With long strides he turned down the river bend and in a few moments the immeasurable white wilderness had swallowed him up.

The Big Hill trail was so called from a high, barren hill around whose base it swung to follow a series of lakes leading to the northwest. Of course as Bob had never been over the trail he did not know its course, or where to find the traps that Douglas had left hanging in the trees or lying on rocks the previous spring at the end of the hunting season. Bill was to go with him to the farthest tilt on this first journey to point these out to him and show him the way, then leave him and hurry back to his own path, while Bob set the traps and worked his way back to the junction tilt.

Shortly after Dick left them they started, Bill

going ahead and breaking the trail with his snow-shoes while Bob behind hauled the loaded toboggan. On they pushed through trees heavily laden with snow, out upon wide, frozen marshes, skirting lakes deep hidden beneath the ice and snow which covered them like a great white blanket. The only halts were for a moment now and again to note the location of traps as they passed, which Bob with his keen memory of the woods could easily find again when he returned to set them. Once they came upon some ptarmigans, white as the snow upon which they stood. Their "grub bag" received several of the birds, which were very tame and easily shot. A hurried march brought them to the first tilt at noon, where they had dinner, and that night, shortly after dark, they reached the second tilt, thirty miles from their starting point. At midday on Thursday they came to the end of the trail.

When they had had dinner of fried ptarmigan and tea, Bill announced: "I'll be leavin' ye now, Bob. In two weeks from Friday we'll be meetin' in th' river tilt."

"All right, an' I'll be there."

"An' don't be gettin' lonesome, now I leaves un."

"I'll be no gettin' lonesome. There be some traps t' mend before I starts back an' a chance bit o' other work as'll keep me busy."

Then Bill turned down the trail, and Bob for the first time in his life was quite alone in the heart of the great wilderness.

VII

A STREAK OF GOOD LUCK

WHEN Bill was gone Bob went to work at once getting some traps that were hanging in the tilt in good working order. He set them and sprang them one after another, testing every one critically. They were practically all new ones, and Douglas, after his careful, painstaking manner, had left them in thorough repair. These were some additional traps that no place had been found for on the trail. There were only about twenty of them and Bob decided that he would set them along the shores of a lake beyond the tilt, where there were none, and look after them on the Saturday mornings that he would be lying up there. The next morning he put them on his toboggan, and shouldering his gun he started out.

Not far away he saw the first marten track in the edge of the spruce woods near the lake. Farther on there were more. This was very satisfactory indeed, and he observed to himself

'The's a wonderful lot o' footin', and 'tis sure a' fine place for martens."

He went to work at once, and one after another the traps were set, some of them in a little circular enclosure made by sticking spruce boughs in the snow, to which a narrow entrance was left, and in this entrance the trap placed and carefully concealed under loose snow and the chain fastened to a near-by sapling. In the centre of each of the enclosures a bit of fresh partridge was placed for bait, to reach which the animal would have to pass over the trap. Where a tree of sufficient size was found in a promising place he chopped it down, a few feet above the snow, cut a notch in the top, and placed the trap in the notch, and arranged the bait over it in such a way that the animal climbing the stump would be compelled to stand upon the trap to secure the meat.

All the marten traps were soon set, but there still remained two fox traps. These he took to a marsh some distance beyond the lake, as the most likely place for foxes to be, for while the marten stays amongst the trees, the fox prefers marshes or barrens. Here, in a place where the snow was hard, he carefully cut out a cube, mak

ing a hole deep enough for the trap to set below the surface. A square covering of crust was trimmed thin with his sheath knife, and fitted over the trap in such a way as to completely conceal it. The chain was fastened to a stump and also carefully concealed. Then over and around the trap pieces of ptarmigan were scattered. This he knew was not good fox bait, but it was the best he had.

"Now if I were only havin' a bit o' scent 'twould help me," he commented as he surveyed his work.

Foxes prefer meat or fish that is tainted and smells bad, and the more decomposed it is, the better it suits them. Bob had no tainted meat now, so he used what he had, in the hope that it might prove effective. A few drops of perfumery, or "scent," as he called it, would have made the fresh meat that he used more attractive to the animals, but unfortunately he had none of that either.

As he left the marsh and crossed from a neck of woods to the lake shore he saw two moving objects far out upon the ice. He dropped behind a clump of bushes. They were caribou.

His gun would not reach them at that distance, and he picked up a dried stick and broke it

They heard the noise and looked towards him. He stood up, exposing himself for the fraction of a second, then concealed himself behind the bushes again. Caribou are very inquisitive animals, and these walked towards him, for they wanted to ascertain what the strange object was that they had seen. When they had come within easy range he selected the smaller one, a young buck, aimed carefully at a spot behind the shoulders, and fired. The animal fell and its mate stood stupidly still and looked at it, and then advanced and smelled of it. Even the report of the gun had not satisfied its curiosity.

It would have been an easy matter for Bob to shoot this second caribou, but the one he had killed was quite sufficient for his needs, and to kill the other would have been ruthless slaughter, little short of murder, and something that Bob, who was a true sportsman, would not stoop to. He therefore stepped out from his cover and revealed himself. Then when the animal saw him clearly, a living enemy, it turned and fled.

Bob removed the skin and quartered the carcass. These he loaded upon his toboggan and hauled to his tilt. The meat was suspended from the limb of a tree outside, where animals

could not reach it and where it would freeze and keep sweet until needed. A small piece was taken into the tilt for immediate use, and some portions of the neck placed in the corner of the tilt where they would decompose somewhat and thus be rendered into desirable fox bait. The skin was stretched against the logs of the side of the shack farthest from the stove, to dry. This would make an excellent cover for Bob's couch and be warm and comfortable to sleep upon The sinew, taken from the back of the animal, was scraped and hung from the roof to season. for he would need it later to use as thread with which to repair moccasins.

Now there was little to do for two or three days, and Bob began for the first time to understand the true loneliness of his new life. The wilderness was working its mysterious influence upon him. It seemed a long, long while since Bill had left him, and he recalled his last Sunday at Wolf Bight as one recalls an event years after it has happened. Sometimes he longed passionately for home and human companionship At other times he was quite content with his day to day existence, and almost forgot that the world contained any one else.

Early the next week he visited the traps. In one he found a Canada jay that had tried to filch the bait. In another a big white rabbit which had been caught while nibbling the young tops of the spruce boughs with which the trap was enclosed. A single marten rewarded him. The pelt was not prime, as it was yet early in the season, but still it was fairly good and Bob was delighted with it.

The fox traps had not been disturbed, but a fox had been feeding upon the caribou head and entrails, where they had been left upon the ice, and one of the traps was taken up and reset here. The others he also put in order, and returned to the tilt with the rabbit and marten. The former, boiled with small bits of pork, made a splendid stew, and the skin was hung to dry, for, with others it could be fashioned into warm, light slippers to wear inside his moccasins when the colder weather came.

The marten pelt was removed from the body by splitting it down the inside of the hind legs to the trunk, and then pulling it down over the head, turning it inside out in the process. In the tilt were a number of stretching boards, that Douglas had provided, tapered down from several

inches wide at one end until they were narrow enough at the other end to slip snugly into the nose of the pelt. Over one of these, with the flesh side out, the skin was tightly drawn and fastened. Then with his knife Bob scraped it carefully, removing such fat and flesh as had adhered to it, after which he placed it in a convenient place to dry.

Bob felt very much elated over this first catch of fur, and was anxious to get at the real trapping. It was only Tuesday, and Bill would not be at the river tilt until Friday of the following week, but he decided to start back the next morning and set all his traps. So on Wednesday morning, with a quarter of venison on his flat sled, he turned down over the trail.

Everything went well. Signs of fur were good and Bob was brimming over with anticipation when a week later he reached the river.

Bill did not arrive until after dark the next evening, and when he pushed the tilt door open he found Bob frying venison steak and a kettle of tea ready for supper.

"Ho, Bob, back ahead o' me, be un? Where'o ye get th' deer's meat?"

"Knocked un over after you left me 'Tis

fine t' be back an' see you, Bill. I've been wonderful lonesome, and wantin' t' see you wonderful bad."

"An' I was thinkin' ye'd be gettin' lonesome by now. You'll not be mindin' bein' alone when you gets used to un. It's all gettin' used t' un."

"An' what's th' signs o' fur? Be there much marten signs?"

"Aye, some. Looks like un goin' t' be some. An' be there much signs on th' Big Hill trail? Dick says there's a lot o' footin' his way."

"I *has* one marten," said Bob proudly, "an' finds good signs."

"Un *has* one a'ready! An' be un a good un?"

"Not so bad."

"Well, you be startin' fine, gettin' th' first marten an' th' first deer."

Bill had taken off his adikey and disposed of his things, and they sat down to eat and enjoy a long evening's chat.

With every week the cold grew in intensity, and with every storm the snow grew deeper, hiding the smaller trees entirely and reaching up towards the lower limbs of the larger ones. The little tilts were covered to the roof, and only a

hole in the white mass showed where the door was.

The sun now described a daily narrowing arc in the heavens, and the hours of light were so few that the hunters found it difficult to cover the distance between their tilts in the little while from dawn to dark. On moonlight mornings Bob started long before day, and on starlight evenings finished his day's work after night. His cheeks and nose were frost-bitten and black, but he did not mind that for he was doing well. Two weeks before Christmas he brought to the river tilt the fur that he had accumulated. There were twenty-eight martens, one mink, two red foxes, one cross fox, a lynx and a wolf. These last two animals he had shot. Bill was already in the tilt when he arrived, and complimented him on his good showing.

Christmas fell on Wednesday that year, and Bill brought word that Dick and Ed were coming up to spend the day with him and Bob. They would reach the tilt on Tuesday night and use the remainder of the week in a caribou hunt, as there were good signs of the animals a little way back in the marshes and they were in need of fresh meat.

"An' I'll not try t' be gettin' here on Friday," said Bill. "I'll be waitin' till Tuesday."

"I'll be doin' th' same, but I'll be here sure on a Tuesday, an' maybe Monday," answered Bob.

So it was arranged that they should have a holiday, and all be together again. It gave Bob a thrill of pleasure when he thought of meeting Dick and Ed and proudly exhibiting his fur to have them examine and criticise the skins and compliment him. It would make a break in the monotonous life.

The day after Bob left the river tilt on his return round, the great dream with which he had started out from Wolf Bight became a reality. He caught a silver fox. It was almost evening when he turned into a marsh where the trap was set. He had caught nothing in it before, and he was thinking seriously of taking it up and placing it farther along the trail. But now in the half dusk, as he approached, something moved. "Sure 'tis a cross," said he. When he came closer and saw that it was really a silver he could not for a moment believe his good fortune. It was too good to be true. When he had killed it and taken it out of the trap he hurried to the

tilt hugging it closely to his breast as though afraid it would get away.

In the tilt he lighted a candle and examined it. It was a beauty! It was worth a lot of money! He patted it and turned it over. Then—there was no one to see him and question his manhood or jibe at his weakness—he cried—cried for pure joy. "'Tis th' savin' o' Emily an' makin' she well—an' makin' she well!" He had prayed that he would get a silver, but his faith had been weak and he had never really believed he should. Now he had it and his cup of joy was full. "Sure th' Lard be good," he repeated to himself.

It was starlight two evenings later when he neared his last tilt. Clear and beautiful and intensely cold was the silent white wilderness and Bob's heart was as clear and light as the frosty air. When the black spot that marked the roof of the almost hidden shack met his view he stopped. A thin curl of smoke was rising from the stovepipe. Some one was in the tilt! He hesitated for only a moment, then hurried forward and pushed the door open. There, smoking his pipe sat Micmac John.

VIII

MICMAC JOHN'S REVENGE

"EVENIN', Bob," said Micmac

"Evenin', John. An' where'd you be comin' from now?"

"Been huntin' t' th' suth'ard. Thought I'd drop in an' see ye."

"Glad t' see ye, John."

After an awkward pause Bob asked:

"What un do wi' th' stove, John?"

"What stove?"

"From th' river tilt. Ye took un, didn't ye?'

"No, I didn't take no stove. I weren't in th' river tilt, an' don't know what yer talkin' about," lied the half-breed.

"Some one took un an' we was layin' it t' you. Now I wonders who 'twere."

"Well, *I* wouldn't take it. Ye ought t' known *I* wouldn't do a thing like that," insisted Micmac, with an air of injured innocence. "Maybe th' Mingen Injuns took it. There's been some around an' they says they'll take anything they find, an' fur too, if they find any in th' tilts

These are their huntin' grounds an' outsiders has no right on 'em. They gave me right t' hunt down t' th' suth'ard."

"Who may th' Mingen Injuns be, now?"

"Mountaineers as belong Mingen way up south, an' hunts between this an' th' Straits."

"I were thinkin' 'twere th' Nascaupees took th' stove if you didn't take un."

"Th' Nascaupees are back here a bit t' th' west'ard. I saw some of 'em one day when I was cruisin' that way an' I made tracks back fer I didn't want t' die so quick. They'll kill anybody they see in here, an' burn th' tilts if they happen over this way an' see 'em. Ye have t' be on th' watch fer 'em all th' time."

"I'll be watchin' out fer un an' keep clear if I sees their footin'," said Bob as he went out to bring in his things.

What Micmac said about the Nascaupees disturbed him not a little. Bob was brave, but every man, no matter how brave he may be, fears an unseen danger when he believes that danger is real and is apt to come upon him unexpectedly and at a time when no opportunity will be offered for defense. It was evident that these Indians were close at hand, and that he was

in daily and imminent danger of being captured, which meant, he was sure, being killed. But he was here for a purpose—to catch all the fur he could—and he must not lose his courage now, before that purpose was accomplished. He must remain on his trail until the hunting season closed. He must be constantly upon his guard, he thought, and perhaps after all would not be discovered. No, he would *not* let himself be afraid.

When he returned to the tilt Micmac John asked:

"Gettin' much fur?"

"Not so bad," he replied. "I has one silver, an' a fine un, too."

The half-breed showed marked interest at once.

"Let's see him. Got him here?"

"No, I left un in th' third tilt. That's where I caught un."

"Where's yer other fur?"

"I took un all down t' th' river tilt. There's a cross among un an' twenty-eight martens."

"Um-m."

Micmac John knew well enough the fur had been taken to some other tilt, for when he arrived here early in the afternoon his first care was

to look for it, but not a skin had he found, and he was disappointed, for it was the purpose of his visit. Bob, absolutely honest and guileless himself, in spite of Dick's constant assertion that Micmac was a thief and worse, was easily deceived by the half-breed's bland manner. Unfortunately he had not learned that every one else was not as honest and straightforward as himself. Micmac's attempt upon his life he had ascribed to a sudden burst of anger, and it was forgiven and forgotten. The selfish enmity, the blackness of heart, the sinister nature that will never overlook and will go to any length to avenge a real or fancied wrong—the characteristics of a half-breed Indian—were wholly beyond his comprehension. He had never dissembled himself, and he did not know that the smiling face and smooth tongue are often screens of deception.

"We'll be havin' supper now," suggested Bob, lifting the boiling kettle off the stove and throwing in some tea. "I'm fair starved."

After they had eaten Micmac filled his pipe and lounged back, smoking in silence for some time, apparently deep in thought. Finally he asked, "When ye goin' back t' th' river, Bob?"

"I'm not thinkin t' start back till Wednesday

an' maybe Thursday, an' reach un Monday or Tuesday after. Bill won't be gettin' there till Tuesday, an' Dick an' Ed expects t' be there then t' spend Christmas an' hunt deer."

"Hunt deer?"

"They're needin' fresh meat, an' deer footin's good in th' meshes."

"The's fine signs to th' nuth'ard from th' second lake in, 'bout twenty mile from here. You could get some there. If ye ain't goin' back till Wednesday why don't ye try 'em? Ye'd get as many as ye wanted," volunteered Micmac.

"Where now be that?"

"Why just 'cross th' first mesh up here, an' through th' bush straight over ye'll come to a lake. Cross that t' where a dead tree hangs out over th' ice. Cut in there an' ye'll see my footin'; foller it over t' th' next lake, then turn right t' th' nuth'ard. The's some meshes in there where th' deer's feedin'. I seen fifteen or twenty, but I didn't want 'em so I let 'em be.

"An' could I make un now in a day?"

"If ye walk sharp an' start early."

"I thinks I'll be startin' in th' mornin' an' campin' over there Sunday, an' Monday I'll be there t' hunt. Can't un come 'long, John?"

"No, I'd like t' go but I got t' see my traps I'll have t' be leavin' ye now," said Micmac, rising

"Not t'-night?"

"Yes, it's fine moonlight an' I can make it all right."

"Ye better stay th' night wi' me, John. There'll be no difference in a day."

"No. I planned t' be goin' right back I seen ye. Good evenin'."

"Good evenin', John."

Micmac John started directly south, but when well out of sight of the tilt suddenly swung around to the eastward and, with the long half-running stride of the Indian, made a straight line for the tilt where Bob had left his silver fox. The moon was full, and the frost that clung to the trees and bushes sparkled like flakes of silver. The aurora faintly searched the northern sky. A rabbit, white and spectre-like, scurried across the half-breed's path, but he did not notice it. Hour after hour his never tiring feet swung the wide snow-shoes in and out with a rhythmic chug-chug as he ran on.

It was nearly morning when at length he slackened his pace, and with the caution of the life-long hunter approached the tilt as he would have

stalked an animal. He made quite certain that the shack was untenanted, then entered boldly. He struck a match and found a candle, which he lighted. There was the silver fox, where Bob had left it. It was dry enough to remove from the board and he loosened it and pulled it off. He examined it critically and gloated over it.

"As black an' fine a one as I ever seen!" he exclaimed. "It'll bring a big price at Mingen. That boy'll never see it again, an' I'll clean out th' rest o' th' fur too, at th' river. Old Campbell'll be sorry when I get through with 'em, he let that feller hunt th' path. He's a fool, an' if he gives me th' slip he'll go back an' say th' Mingen Injuns took his fur. I fixed that wi' my story all right. I'll take th' lot t' Mingen an' get cash fer 'em, an' be back t' th' Bay with open water with 'nuff martens so's they won't suspect me."

He started a fire and slept until shortly after daylight. Then had breakfast and started down the trail towards the river at the same rapid pace that he had held before.

It was not quite dark when he glimpsed the tilt, and approached it with even more caution than he had observed above.

"He don't know enough to lie," said he to himself, referring to Bob, "but it's best t' take care, fer one o' th' others might be here."

When he was satisfied that the tilt was unoccupied he entered boldly and appropriated every skin of fur he found—not only all of Bob's, but also a few martens Bill had left there. No time was lost, for any accident might send Bill or one of the others here at an unexpected moment. The pelts were packed quickly but carefully into his hunting bag and within twenty minutes after his arrival he was retreating up the trail at a half run.

Some time after dark he reached the first tilt above the river, where he spent the night. Short cuts and fast travelling brought him on Sunday night to the tilt at the end of the trail where he had left Bob. He made quite certain that the lad had really gone on his caribou hunt, and then went boldly in and made himself as comfortable as he could for the night without a stove, for Bob had taken the stove with him, to heat his tent.

"If he comes back t'-night and finds me here," he said, "I'll just tell him I changed my mind an' came back t' go on th' deer hunt. I'll lie t' him

about what I got in my bag an' he'll never suspicion ; he don't know enough."

Micmac John's work was not yet finished. He had arranged a full and complete revenge. Bob's hunt for caribou would carry him far away from the tilt and into a section where no searching party would be likely to go. The half-breed's plan was now to follow and shoot the lad from ambush. If by chance any one ever should find the body—which seemed a quite improbable happening—Bob's death would no doubt be laid at the door of the Nascaupee Indians.

Micmac John deposited the bag of stolen pelts in a safe place in the tilt, intending to return for them after his bloody mission was accomplished, and several hours before daylight on Monday morning started out in the ghostly moonlight to trail Bob to his death.

IX

LOST IN THE SNOW

THE trail that Bob had made lay open and well-defined in the snow, and hour after hour the half-breed followed it, like a hound follows its prey.

Early in the morning the sky clouded heavily and towards noon snow began to fall. It was a bitterly cold day. Micmac John increased his pace for the trail would soon be hidden and he was not quite sure when he should find the camp. From the lakes the trail turned directly north and for several miles ran through a flat, wooded country. After a while there were wide open marshes, with narrow timbered strips between. An hour after noon he crossed a two mile stretch of this marsh and in a little clump of trees on the farther side of it came so suddenly upon the tent that he almost ran against it.

The snow was by this time falling thickly and a rising westerly wind was sweeping the marsh making travelling exceedingly difficult, and completely hiding the trail beyond the trees.

The tent flaps were fastened on the outside, and Bob was away, as Micmac John expected he would be, searching for caribou.

"There's no use tryin' t' foller him in this snow," said he to himself, "I'd be sure t' miss him. But I'll take the tent an' outfit away on his flat sled an' if he don't have cover th' cold 'll fix him before mornin'. There'll be no livin' in it over night with th' wind blowin' a gale as it's goin' to do with dark. My footin' 'll soon be hid an' he can't foller me. I can shoot him easy enough if he does."

It was the work of only a few minutes to strike the tent and pack it and the other things, which included the stove, an axe, blanket and food, on the toboggan.

The half-breed was highly elated when he started off with his booty. The storm had come at just the right time. The elements would work a slower but just as sure a revenge as his gun and at the same time cover every trace of his villainy. He laughed as he pictured to himself Bob's look of mystification and alarm when he returned and failed to find the tent, and how the lad would think he had made a mistake in the location and the desperate search for the camp

that would follow, only to end finally in the snow and cold conquering him, as they were sure to do, and the wolves perhaps scattering his bones.

"That's a fine end t' him an' he'll never be takin' trails away from *me* again," he chuckled.

The whole picture as he imagined it was food for his black heart and he forgot his own uncomfortable position in the delight that he felt at the horrible death that he had so cleverly and cruelly arranged for Bob.

Micmac John retraced his steps some eight miles to the wide stretch of timber land. There he halted and pitched camp. The wind shrieked through the tree tops and swept the marshes in its untamed fury, but he was quite warm and contented in the tent. The storm was working his revenge for him, and he was quite satisfied that it would do the work well.

The men that Bob Gray had come in contact with and associated with all his life were the honest, upright people of the Bay. He had never known a man that would dishonestly take a farthing's worth of another's property or that would knowingly harm a fellow being. The Bay folk were constantly helping their more needy neighbours and lived almost as intimately

as brothers. When any one was in trouble the others came to offer sympathy and frequently deprived themselves of the actual necessaries of life that their neighbours might not suffer. Sometimes they had their misunderstandings and quarrels, but these were all of a momentary character and quickly forgotten.

There was little wonder then that Bob had failed to read Micmac John's true character, and it could hardly be expected that he would suspect the half-breed of trying to injure him. Children of these far-off, thinly populated lands in many respects develop judgment and mature in thought at a much younger age than in more thickly settled and more favoured countries. One reason for this is the constant fight for existence that is being waged and the necessity for them to take up their share of the burden of life early. Another reason is doubtless the fact that their isolated homes cut them off from the companionship of children of their own age and their associates are almost wholly men and women grown. This was the case with Bob and in courage, thoughtfulness of the comfort of others and physical endurance he was a man, while in guile he was a mere baby. He believed that

Micmac John was like every other man he knew and was a good neighbour.

When men have lived long in the wilderness without fresh meat they have a tremendous longing for it. Bob knew that neither Dick nor Ed had tasted venison since they reached their hunting grounds, for they had not been as fortunate as he, and that some of the fresh-killed meat would be a great treat to them and one they would appreciate. Therefore when Micmac John told him how easily caribou could be killed a day's journey to the northward, he thought that it would make a nice Christmas surprise for his friends if he hauled a toboggan load of venison down to the river tilt with him. True they had planned a hunt, but that would take place after Christmas and he wanted to make them happy on that day.

So after Micmac John left him on Friday night he prepared for an early start to the caribou feeding grounds on Saturday morning.

We have seen the route he took across the lakes and timbered flats and marshes to the place where he pitched his camp in the little clump of diminutive fir trees almost twenty miles from his tilt. It was evening when he reached there and

up to this time, to his astonishment, he had seen no signs of caribou. A few miles beyond the marsh he saw a ridge of low hills running east and west and decided that the feeding grounds of the animals must lie the other side of them.

He banked the snow around the tent to keep out the wind, broke an abundant supply of green boughs for a bed, and cut a good stock of wood for the day of rest. Two logs were placed in a parallel position in the tent upon which to rest the stove that it might not sink in the deep snow with the heat. Then it was put up, and a fire started, and he was very comfortably settled for the night.

The unfamiliar and unusually bleak character of the country gave him a feeling of restlessness and dissatisfaction when he arose on Sunday morning and viewed his surroundings. It was quite different from anything he had ever experienced before and he had a strong desire to go out at once and look for the caribou, and if no signs of them were found to turn back on Monday to the tilt. But then he asked himself, would his mother approve of this? He decided that she would not, and, said he: "'Twould be

huntin' just as much as t' go shootin' and th Lard would be gettin' angry wi' me too."

That kept him from going, and he spent the day in the tent drawing mind pictures of the little cabin home that he longed so much to see and the loved ones that were there. The thought of little Emily, lying helpless but still so patient, brought tears to his eyes. But all would be well in the end, he told himself, for God was good and had given him the silver fox he had prayed for that Emily might go and be cured.

What a proud and happy day it would be for him when with his greatest hopes fulfilled, the boat ground her nose again upon the beach below the cabin from which he had started so full of ambition that long ago morning in September How his father would come down to shake his hand and say: "My stalwart lad has done bravely, an' I'm proud o' un." His mother, all smiles, would run out to meet him and take him in her arms and praise and pet him, and then he would hurry in to see dear, patient little Emily on her couch, and her face would light up at sight of him and she would hold out her hands to him in an ecstasy of delight and call: "Oh, Bob! Bob! my fine big brother has come back

to me at last!" Then he would bring in his furs and proudly exhibit the silver fox and hear their praises, and perhaps he would have another silver fox by that time. After a while Douglas Campbell would come over and tell him how wonderfully well he had done. With his share of the martens he would pay his debt to the company, and he and Douglas would let the mail boat doctor sell the silver fox and other skins for them, and Emily would go to the hospital and after a little while come back her old gay little self again, to romp and play and laugh and tease him as she used to do. With fancy making for him these dreams of happiness, the day passed after all much less tediously than he had expected.

On Monday morning, as soon as it was light enough to see, Bob started out to look for the caribou, leaving the tent as Micmac John found it. He made the great mistake of not taking with him his axe, for an axe is often a life saver in the northern wilderness, and a hunter should never be without one. He crossed the marsh and then the ridge of low hills to the northward, finally coming out upon a large lake. It was now midday, the snow had commenced fall

ing, and to continue the hunt further was useless.

"'Tis goin' t' be nasty weather an' I'll have t' be gettin' back t' th' tent," said he regretfully as he realized that a severe storm was upon him.

Reluctantly he retraced his steps. In a little while his tracks were all covered, and not a landmark that he had noted on his inward journey was visible through the blinding snow. He reached the ridge in safety, however, and crossed it and then took the direction that he believed would carry him to the camp, using the wind, which had been blowing from the westward all day, as his guide. Towards dark he came to what he supposed was the clump of trees where he had left his tent in the morning, but no tent was there.

"'Tis wonderful strange!" he exclaimed as he stood for a moment in uncertainty.

He was quite positive it was the right place, and he looked for axe cuttings, where he had chopped down trees for fire-wood, and found them. So, this was the place, but where was the tent? He was mystified. He searched up and down every corner of the grove, but found

no clue. Could the Nascaupees have found his camp and carried his things away? There was no other solution.

"'Th' Nascaupees has took un. The Nascaupees has sure took un," he said dejectedly, when he realized that the tent was really gone.

His situation was now desperate. He had no axe with which to build a temporary shelter or cut wood for a fire. The nearest cover was his tilt, and to reach it in the blinding, smothering snow-storm seemed hopeless. Already the cold was eating to his bones and he knew he must keep moving or freeze to death.

With the wind on his right he turned towards the south in the gathering darkness. He could not see two yards ahead. Blindly he plodded along hour after hour. As the time dragged on it seemed to him that he had been walking for ages. His motion became mechanical. He was faint from hunger and his mouth parched with thirst. The bitter wind was reaching to his very vitals in spite of the exertion, and at last he did not feel it much. He stumbled and fell now and again and each time it was more difficult to rise.

There was always a strong inclination to lie a

little where he fell and rest, but his benumbed brain told him that to stop walking meant death, and urged him up again to further action.

Finally the snow ceased but he did not notice it. With his head held back and staring straight before him at nothing he stalked on throwing his feet ahead like an automaton. The stars came out one after another and looked down pitilessly upon the tragedy that was being enacted before their very eyes.

Many hours had passed; morning was close at hand. The cold grew more intensely bitter but Bob did not know it. He was quite insensible to sensations now. Vaguely he imagined himself going home to Wolf Bight. It was not far—he was almost there. In a little while he would see his father and mother and Emily—Emily—Emily was sick. He had something to make her her well—make her well—a silver fox—that would do it—yes, that would do it—a silver fox would make her well—dear little Emily.

From the distance there came over the frozen world a wolf's howl, followed by another and another. The wolves were giving the cry of pursuit. There must be many of them and they were after caribou or game of some sort. This

was the only impression the sound made upon his numbed senses.

Daylight was coming. He was very sleepy—very, very sleepy. Why not go to sleep? There was no reason for walking when it was so nice and warm here—and he was so weary and sleepy. There were trees all around and a nice white bed spread under them. He stumbled and fell and did not try to get up. Why should he? There was plenty of time to go home. It was so comfortable and soft here and he was so sleepy.

Then he imagined that he was in the warm tilt with the fire crackling in the stove. He cuddled down in the snow, and said the little prayer that he never forgot at night.

"Now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep,
I-pray-thee-Lard-my-soul-to-keep,
If-I-should-die-before-I-wake
I-pray-thee-Lard-my-soul-to-take.
An'-God-make-Emily-well."

The wolves were clamouring in the distance. They had caught the game that they were chasing. He could just hear them as he fell asleep.

The sun broke with the glory of a new world over the white wilderness. The wolf howls ceased—and all was still.

X

THE PENALTY

FOR some reason Micmac John could not sleep. A little while he lay awake voluntarily, trying to contrive a plan to follow should he be found out. If, after he returned to the tilt for the pelts, there should not be sufficient snow to cover his trail, for instance, before the searching party came to look for Bob—and it surely would come, headed by Dick Blake—he would be in grave danger of being discovered. Why had he not thought of all this before? He was afraid of Dick Blake, and Dick was the one man in the world, perhaps, that he was afraid of. Would Dick shoot him? he asked himself. Probably. If he were found he would have to die.

Life is sweet to a strong, healthy man brought face to face with the reality of death. In his more than half savage existence Micmac John had faced death frequently, and sometimes daily and had never shrunk from it or felt a tremour of fear. He had held neither his own nor the life of other men as a thing of much value. The fact

was that never before had he given one serious thought to what it meant to die. Like the foxes and the wolves, he had been an animal of prey and had looked upon life and death with hardly more consideration than they, and with the stoical indifference of his savage Indian ancestors.

But for some inexplicable reason this night the white half of his nature had been awakened and he found himself thinking of what it meant to die—to cease to be, with the world going on and on afterwards just as though nothing had happened. Then the teachings of a missionary whom he had heard preach in Nova Scotia came to him. He remembered what had been said of eternal happiness or eternal torment—that one or the other state awaited the soul of every one after death. Then a great terror took possession of him. If Bob Gray died, as he certainly must in this storm, *he* would be responsible for it, and *his* soul would be consigned to eternal torment—the terrible torment to last forever and forever, depicted by the missionary. He had committed many sins in his life, but they were of the past and forgotten. This was of the present. He could already, in his frenzied imagination see

Dick Blake, the avenger. Dick would shoot him. That was certain—and then—eternal torment.

The wind moaned outside, and then rose to a shriek. He sprang up and looked wildly about him. It was the shriek of a damned soul! No, he had been dozing and it was only a dream, and he lay back trembling.

For a long while he could not go to sleep again. Fear had taken absolute and complete possession of him—the fear of the eternal damnation that the missionary had so vividly pictured. It was a picture that had been received at the time without being seen and through all these years had remained in his brain, covered and hidden. This day's work had suddenly and for the first time drawn aside the screen and left it bare before his eyes displaying to him every fearful minute outline. He was a murderer and he would be punished. There was no thought of repentance for sins committed—only fear of a fate that he shrunk from but which confronted him as a reality and a certainty—as great a certainty as his rising in the morning and so near at hand. He got up and looked out. The wind blew clouds of snow into his face. He could not see the tree that he knew was ten feet away. It

was an awful night for a man to be out without shelter.

Micmac John lay down again and after a time the tired brain and body yielded to nature and he slept.

The instincts of the half-breed, keen even in slumber, felt rather than heard the diminishing of wind and snow as the storm subsided with the approach of morning, and he arose at once. The rest had quieted his nerves, and he was the stolid, revengeful Indian again. After a meagre breakfast of tea and jerked venison he took down the tent and lashed the things securely upon the toboggan and ere the first stars began to glimmer through the cloud rifts he was hurrying away in the stillness of the night.

When the sky finally cleared and the moon came out, cold and brilliant, there was something uncanny and weird in its light lying upon earth's white shroud rent here and there by long, dark shadows across the trail. There was an indefinable mystery in the atmosphere. Micmac John, accustomed as he was to the wilderness, felt an uneasiness in his soul, the reflex perhaps of the previous night's awakening, that he could not quite throw off—a sense of impending

danger—of a calamity about to happen. The trees became mighty men ready to strike at him as he approached and behind every bush crouched a waiting enemy. His guilty conscience was at work. The little spirit that God had placed within his bosom, to tell him when he was doing wrong, was not quite dead.

He increased his speed as daylight approached travelling almost at a run. Suddenly he stopped to listen. From somewhere in the distance behind him a wolf cry broke the morning silence. In a little while there were more wolf cries, and they were coming nearer and nearer. The animals were doubtless following some quarry. Was it Bob they were after? A momentary qualm at the thought was quickly replaced by a feeling of satisfaction. That, he tried to argue with himself, would cover every clue to what had happened and was what he had hoped for. He hurried on.

All at once a spasm of fear brought him to a halt. Could it be himself the wolves were trailing! The old horror of the night came back with all its reality and force. A clammy sweat broke out upon his body. He looked wildly about him for a retreat, but there was none. The wolves

were gaining upon him rapidly and were very close now. There was no longer any doubt that *he* was their quarry. They were trailing *him.* Micmac John was in a narrow, open marsh, and the wolves were already at the edge of the woods that skirted it a hundred yards behind. A little distance ahead of him was a big boulder, and he ran for it. At that moment the pack came into view. He stopped and stood paralyzed until they were within thirty yards of him, then he turned mechanically, from force of habit, and fired at the leader, which fell. This held them in check for an instant and roused him to action He grabbed an axe from the toboggan and had time to gain the rock and take a stand with his back against it.

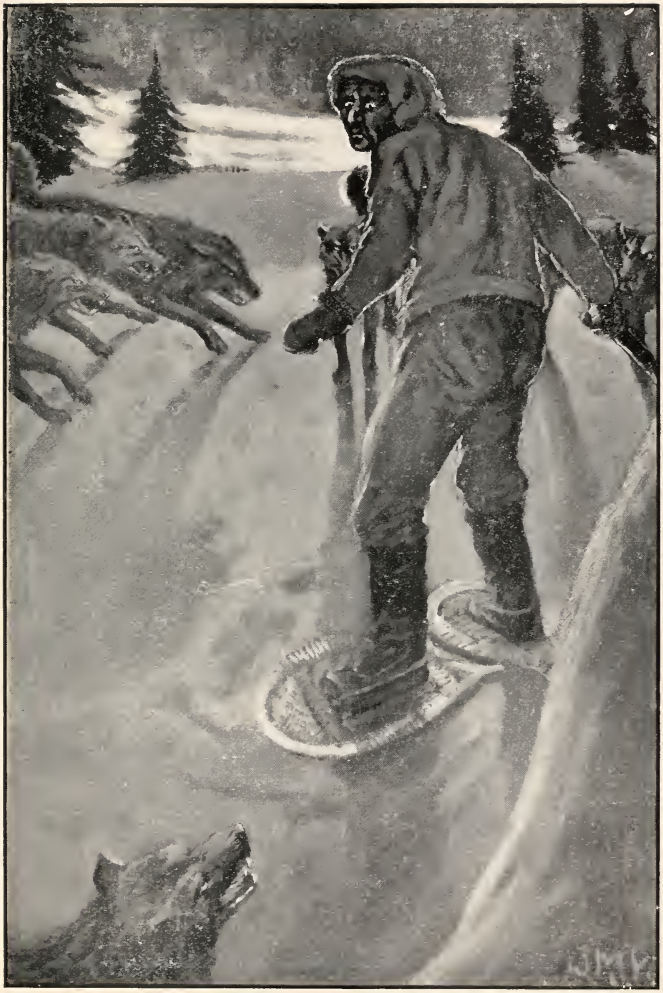
As the animals rushed upon the half breed he swung the axe and split the head of one This temporarily repulsed them. He held them at bay for a time, swinging his axe at every attempted approach. They formed themselves into a half circle just beyond his reach, snapping and snarling at him and showing their ugly fangs. Another big gray creature, bolder than the rest, made a rush, but the swinging axe split its head, just as it had the others. They re-

treated a few paces, but they were not to be kept back for long. Micmac John knew that his end had come. His face was drawn and terrified, and in spite of the fearful cold and biting frost, perspiration stood out upon his forehead.

It was broad daylight now. Another wolf attacked from the front and fell under the axe. A little longer they parleyed. They were gradually growing more bold and narrowing the circle—coming so close that they were almost within reach of the swinging weapon. Finally a wolf on the right, and one on the left, charged at the same time, and in an instant those in front, as though acting upon a prearranged signal, closed in, and the pack became one snarling, fighting, clamouring mass.

When the sun broke over the eastern horizon a little later it looked upon a circle of flat-tramped, blood-stained snow, over which were scattered bare picked human bones and pieces of torn clothing. A pack of wolves trotted leisurely away over the marsh.

In the woods not a mile distant two Indian hunters were following the trail that led to Bob's unconscious body.



"Micmac John knew his end had come"

XI

THE TRAGEDY OF THE TRAIL

A WEEK passed and Christmas eve came The weather continued clear and surpassingly fine. It was ideal weather for trapping, with no new snow to clog the traps and interfere with the hunters in their work The atmosphere was transparent and crisp, and as it entered the lungs stimulated the body like a tonic, giving new life and buoyancy and action to the limbs. The sun never ventured far from the horizon now and the cold grew steadily more intense and penetrating The river had long ago been chained by the mighty Frost King and over the earth the snow lay fully six feet deep where the wind had not drifted it away.

A full hour before sunset Dick and Ed, in high good humour at the prospect of the holiday they had planned, arrived at the river tilt. They came together expecting to find Bob and Bill awaiting them there, but the shack was empty.

"We'll be havin' th' tilt snug an' warm for th' lads when they comes," said Dick, as he went

briskly to work to build a fire in the stove "You get some ice t' melt for th' tea, Ed. Th lads'll be handy t' gettin' in now, an' when they comes supper'll be pipin' hot for un."

Ed took an axe and a pail to the river where he chopped out pieces of fine, clear ice with which to fill the kettle. When he came back Dick had a roaring fire and was busy preparing partridges to boil.

Pretty soon Bill arrived, and they gave him an uproarious greeting. It was the first time Bill and Ed had met since they came to their trails in the fall, and the two friends were as glad to see each other as though they had been separated for years.

"An' how be un now, Bill, an' how's th' fur?" asked Ed when they were seated.

"Fine," replied Bill. "Fur's been fine th' year. I has more by now 'an I gets all o' last season, an' one silver too."

"A silver? An' be he a good un?"

"Not so bad. He's a little gray on th' rump, but not enough t' hurt un much."

"Well, now, you be doin' fine. I finds un not so bad, too—about th' best year I ever has, but one. That were twelve year ago, an' I gets a

rare lot o' fur that year—a rare lot—but I'm not catchin' all of un myself. I gets most of un from th' Injuns."

"An' how were un doin' that now?" asked Bill.

"Now don't be tellin' that yarn agin," broke in Dick. "Sure Bill's heard un—leastways he must 'a' heard un."

"No, I never heard un," said Bill.

"An' ain't been missin' much then. 'Tis just one o' Ed's yarns, an' no truth in un."

"'Tis no yarn. 'Tis true, an' I could prove un by th' Injuns. Leastways I could if I knew where un were, but none o' that crowd o' Injuns comes this way these days."

"What were the yarn, now?" asked Bill.

"I says 'tis no yarn. 'Tis what happened t' me," asserted Ed, assuming a much injured air "As I were sayin', 'twere a frosty evenin' twelve year ago. I were comin' t' my lower tilt, an' when I gets handy t' un what does I see but a big band o' mountaineers around th' tilt. Th' mountaineers was not always friendly in those times as they be now, an' I makes up my mind for trouble. I comes up t' un an' speaks t' un pleasant, an' goes right in th' tilt t' see if un be takin' things. I finds a whole barrel o' flour

missin' an' comes out at un. They owns up t' eatin' th' flour, an' they had eat th' hull barrel t' *one* meal—now ye mind, *one* meal. When un eats a *barrel* o' flour t' *one* meal there be a big band o' un. They was so many o' un I never counted. They was like t' be ugly at first, but I looks fierce like, an' tells un they must gi' me fur t' pay for un. I was so fierce like I scares un —scares un bad. I were *one* man alone, an' wi' a bold face I had th' whole band so scared they each gives me a marten, an' I has a flat sled load o' martens from un—handy t' a hundred an' fifty—an' if I hadn't 'a' been bold an' scared un I'd 'a' had none. Injuns be easy scared if un knows how t' go about it."

Bill laughed and remarked,

"'Tis sure a fine yarn, Ed. How does un look t' be fierce an' scare folk?"

"A fine yarn! An' I tells un 'tis a gospel truth, an' no yarn," asserted Ed, apparently very indignant at the insinuation.

"Bob's late comin'," remarked Dick. "'Tis gettin' dark."

"He be, now," said Bill, "an' he were sayin' he'd be gettin' here th' night an' maybe o' Monday night. 'Tis strange."

They ate supper and the evening wore on, and no Bob. Bill went out several times to listen for the click of snow-shoes, but always came back to say, "No sign o' un yet." Finally it became quite certain that Bob was not coming that night.

"'Tis wonderful queer now, an' he promised," Bill remarked, at length. "An' he brought down his fur last trip—a fine lot."

"Where be un?" asked Dick.

Bill looked for the fur. It was nowhere to be found, and, mystified and astounded, he exclaimed: "Sure th' fur be gone! Bob's an' mine too!"

"Gone!" Dick and Ed both spoke together. "An' where now?"

"Gone! His an' mine! 'Twere here when we leaves th' tilt, an' 'tis gone now!"

The three had risen to their feet and stood looking at each other for awhile in silence. Finally Dick spoke:

"'Tis what I was fearin'. 'Tis some o' Micmac John's work. Now where be Bob? Somethin's been happenin' t' th' lad. Micmac John's been doin' somethin' wi' un, an' we must find un."

"We must find un an' run that devil Injun

down," exclaimed Ed, reaching for his adikey We mustn't be losin' time about un, neither."

"'Twill be no use goin' now," said Dick, with better judgment. "Th' moon's down an' we'd be missin' th' trail in th' dark, but wi' daylight we must be goin'."

Ed hung his adikey up again. "I were forgettin' th' moon were down. We'll have t' bide here for daylight," he assented. Then he gritted his teeth. "That Injun'll have t' suffer for un if he's done foul wi' Bob."

The remainder of the evening was spent in putting forth conjectures as to what had possibly befallen Bob. They were much concerned but tried to reassure themselves with the thought that he might have been delayed one tilt back for the night, and that Micmac John had done nothing worse than steal the fur. Nevertheless their evening was spoiled—the evening they had looked forward to with so much pleasure and their minds were filled with anxious thoughts when finally they rolled into their blankets for the night.

Christmas morning came with a dead, searching cold that made the three men shiver as they stepped out of the warm tilt long before dawn

and strode off in single file into the silent, dark forest. After a while daylight came, and then the sun, beautiful but cheerless, appeared above the eastern hills to reveal the white splendour of the world and make the frost-hung fir trees and bushes scintillate and sparkle like a gem-hung fairy-land. But the three men saw none of this. Before them lay a black, unknown horror that they dreaded, yet hurried on to meet. The air breathed a mystery that they could not fathom. Their hearts were weighted with a nameless dread.

Their pace never once slackened and not a word was spoken until after several hours the first tilt came suddenly into view, when Dick said laconically:

"No smoke. He's not here."

"An' no signs o' his bein' on th' trail since th' storm," added Ed.

"No footin' t' mark un at all," assented Dick. "What's happened has happened before th' last snow."

"Aye, before th' last snow. 'Twas before th' storm it happened."

Here they took a brief half hour to rest and boil the kettle, and the remainder of that day

and all the next day kept up their tireless, silent march. Not a track in the unbroken white was there to give them a ray of hope, and every step they took made more certain the tragedy they dreaded.

At noon on the third day they reached the last tilt. Bill was ahead, and when he pushed the door open he exclaimed: 'Th' stove's gone!" Then they found the bag that Micmac John had left there with the fur in it.

"Now that's Micmac John's bag," said Ed "What devilment has th' Injun been doin'? Now why did he *leave* th' fur? 'Tis strange—wonderful strange."

Dick noted the evidences of an open fire having been kindled upon the earthen floor. "That fire were made since th' stove were taken," he said. "Micmac John left th' fur an' made th' fire He's been stoppin' here a night after Bob left wi' th' stove. But why were Bob leavin' wi' th' stove? An' where has he gone? An' why has th' Injun been leavin' th' fur here an' not comin for un again? We'll have t' be findin' out."

They started immediately to search for some clue of the missing lad, each taking a different direction and agreeing to meet at night in the

tilt. Everywhere they looked, but nothing was discovered, and, weary and disheartened, they turned back with dusk. Dick returned across the first lake above the tilt. As he strode along one of his snow-shoes pressed upon something hard, and he stopped to kick the snow away from it. It was a deer's antler. He uncovered it farther and found a chain, which he pulled up, disclosing a trap and in it a silver fox, dead and frozen stiff. He straightened up and looked at it.

"A Christmas present for Bob an' he never got un," he said aloud. "Th' lad's sure perished not t' be findin' his silver."

Here was a discovery that meant something. Bob had been setting traps in that direction, and might have a string of traps farther on. Possibly he had gone to put them in order when the storm came, and had been caught in it farther up, and perished. Anyway it was worth investigation. When Dick returned with the fox and the trap to the tilt he told the others of his theory and it was decided to concentrate their efforts in that direction in the morning.

Accordingly the next day they pushed farther to the westward across the second lake and at a

point where a dead tree hung out over the ice found fresh axe cuttings. A little farther on they saw one or two sapling tops chopped off. These were in a line to the northward, and they took that direction. Finally they came upon a marsh, and heading in the same northerly course across it, came upon the tracks of a pack of wolves. Looking in the direction from which these led, Dick stopped and pointed towards a high boulder half a mile to the eastward.

"Now what be that black on th' snow handy t' th' rock?" he asked.

"'Tis lookin' t' me like a flat sled," said Ed.

"We'll have a look at un," suggested Dick, who hurried forward with the others at his heels. Suddenly he stopped, and pointed at the beaten snow and scattered bones and torn clothing, where Micmac John had fought so desperately for his life. The three men stood horror stricken, their faces drawn and tense. This, then, was the solution of the mystery! This was what had happened to Bob! Pretty soon Dick spoke:

"Th' poor lad! Th' poor lad! An' th' wolves got un!"

"An' his poor mother," said Ed, choking. "'Twill break her heart, she were countin' so on

Bob. An' th' little maid as is sick--'twill kill she."

"Yes," said Bill, "Emily 'll be mournin' herself t' death wi'out Bob."

These big, soft-hearted trappers were all crying now like women. No other thought occurred to them than that these ghastly remains were Bob's for the toboggan and things on it were his.

After a while they tenderly gathered up the human remains and placed them upon the toboggan. Then they picked up the gun and blood spattered axe.

"Now here be another axe on th' flat sled," said Dick. "What were Bob havin' two axes for?"

"'Tis strange," said Ed.

"He must ha' had one cached in here, an' were bringin' un back," suggested Bill, and this seemed a satisfactory explanation.

"I'll take some pieces o' th' clothes. His mother 'll be wantin' somethin' that he wore when it happened," said Dick, as he gathered some of the larger fragments of cloth from the snow.

Then with bowed heads and heavy hearts they silently retraced their steps to the tilt, hauling the toboggan after them.

At the tilt they halted to arrange their future course of action.

"Now," said Dick, "what's t' be done? 'Twill only give pain th' sooner t' th' family t' go out an' tell un, an' 'twill do no good. I'm thinkin' 'tis best t' take th' remains t' th' river tilt an' not go out with un till we goes home wi' open water."

"No, I'm not thinkin' that way," dissented Ed. "Bob's mother 'll be wantin' t' know right off. 'Tis not right t' keep it from she, an' she'll never be forgivin' us if we're doin' it."

"They's trouble enough down there that they *knows* of," argued Dick. "They'll be thinkin' Bob safe 'an not expectin' he till th' open water an' we don't tell un, an' between now an' then have so much less t' worry un, and be so much happier 'an if they were knowin'. Folks lives only so long anyways an' troubles they has an' don't know about is troubles they don't have, or th' same as not havin' un, an' their lives is that much happier."

"I'm still thinkin' they'll be wantin' t' know," insisted Ed. "They'll be plannin' th' whole winter for Bob's comin' an' when they's expectin' him an' hears he's dead, 'twill be worse'n hearin' before they expects un. Leastways, they'll be

gettin' over un th' sooner they hears, for trouble always wears off some wi' passin' time. 'Tis our duty t' go an' tell un *now*, I'm thinkin'."

"What's un think, Bill?" asked Dick.

'I'm thinkin with Ed, 'tis best t' go," said Bill, positively.

"Well, maybe 'tis—maybe 'tis," Dick finally assented. "Now, who'll be goin'? 'Twill be a wonderful hard task t' break th' news. I'm thinkin' my heart 'd be failin' me when I gets there. Ed, would un *mind* goin'?"

Ed hesitated a moment, then he said:

"I'm fearin' t' tell th' mother, but 'tis for some one t' do. 'Tis my duty t' do un—an' I'll be goin'."

It was finally arranged that Ed should begin his journey the following morning, drawing the remains on a toboggan, and taking otherwise only the tent, a tent stove, and enough food to see him through, leaving the remainder of Bob's things to be carried out in the boat in the spring. Dick undertook the charge of them as well as Bob's fur. Ed was to take the short cut to the river tilt and thence follow the river ice while Dick and Bill sprang Bob's traps on the upper end of his path

"But," said Bill, after this arrangement was made, "Bob's folks be in sore need o' th' fur he'd be gettin' an' when Ed comes back, I'm thinkin' 'twould be fine for us not t' be takin' rest o' Saturdays but turnin' right back in th' trails. Ed can be doin' one tilt o' your trail, Dick, an' so shortenin' your trail one tilt so you can do two o' mine an' I'll shorten Ed two tilts an' do *three* o' Bob's. I'd be willin' t' work *Sundays* an' I'm thinkin' th' Lard wouldn't be findin' fault o' me for doin' un seein' Emily's needin' th' fur t' go t' th' doctor. 'Tis sure th' Lard wouldn't be gettin' angry wi' me for *that*, for He knows how bad off Emily is."

This generous proposal met with the approval of all, and details were arranged accordingly that evening as to just what each was to do until the furring season closed in the spring.

This was Saturday, December the twenty-eighth. On Sunday morning Ed bade good-bye to his companions and began the long and lonely journey to Wolf Bight with his ghastly charge in tow.

XII

IN THE HANDS OF THE NASCAUPEES

LATE on the afternoon of the day that Bob fell asleep in the snow, he awoke to new and strange surroundings. His first conscious moments brought with them a sense of comfortable security. His mind had thrown off every feeling of responsibility and he knew only that he was warm and snugly tucked into bed and that the odour of spruce forest and wood smoke that he breathed was very pleasant. He lay quiet for a time, with his eyes closed, in a state of blissful, half consciousness, vaguely realizing these things, but not possessing sufficient energy to open his eyes and investigate them or question where he was.

Slowly his mind awoke from its lethargy and then he began to remember as a dim, uncertain dream, his experience of the night before. Gradually it became more real but he recalled his failure to find the tent, the fearful groping in the snow, and his struggle for life against the storm

as something that had happened in the long distant past.

"But how could all this ha' been happenin t' me now?" he asked himself, for here he was snug in the tent—or perhaps he had reached the tilt and did not remember.

He opened his eyes now for the first time to see and satisfy himself as to whether it was the tent or the tilt he was in, and what he saw astonished and brought him to his senses very quickly.

He recognized at once the interior of an Indian wigwam. In the centre a fire was burning and an Indian woman was leaning over it stirring the contents of a kettle. On the opposite side of the fire from her sat a young Indian maiden of about Bob's own age netting the babiche in a snow-shoe, her fingers plying deftly in and out. The woman and girl wore deerskin garments of peculiar design. The former was fat and ugly, the latter slender, and very comely, he thought, from her sleek black hair to her feet encased in daintily worked little moccasins. At that moment she glanced towards him and said something to her companion, who turned in his direction also.

"Where am I?" he asked wonderingly and with some alarm.

They both laughed and jabbered then in their Indian tongue but he could not understand a word they said. The girl lay aside the snow-shoe and babiche and, taking up a tin cup, dipped some hot broth from the kettle and offered it to him. He accepted it gladly for he was thirsty and felt unaccountably weak. The broth contained no salt or flavouring of any kind, but was very refreshing. When he had finished it he put the cup down and attempted to rise but this movement brought forth a flood of Indian expostulations and he was forced to lie quiet again.

It was very evident that he was either considered an invalid too ill to move or was held in bondage. He had never heard that Indian captives were tucked into soft deerskin robes and fed broth by comely Indian maidens, however, and if he were a prisoner it did not promise to be so very disagreeable a captivity.

On the whole it was very pleasant and restful lying there on the soft skins of which his bed was composed, for he still felt tired and weak. He took in every detail of his surroundings. The wig-

wam was circular in form and of good size. It was made of reindeer skins stretched over poles very dingy and black, with an opening at the top to permit the smoke from the fire in the centre to escape. Flat stones raised slightly above the ground served as a fireplace, and around it were thickly laid spruce boughs. Some strips of jerked venison hung from the poles above, and near his feet he glimpsed his own gun and powder horn.

Bob could see at once that these Indians were much more primitive than those he knew at the Bay and, unfamiliar as he was with the Indian language, he noticed a marked difference in the intonation and inflection when the woman spoke.

"Now," said Bob to himself, "th' Nascaupees must ha' found me an' these be Nascaupees. But Mountaineers an' every one says Nascaupees be savage an' cruel, an' I'm not knowin' what un be. 'Tis queer—most wonderful queer."

He had no recollection of lying down in the snow. The last he could definitely recall was his fearful battling with the storm. There was a sort of hazy remembrance of something that he could not quite grasp—of having gone to

sleep somewhere in a snug, warm bed spread with white sheets. Try as he would he could not explain his presence in this Indian wigwam, nor could he tell how long he had been here. It seemed to him years since the morning he left the tilt to go on the caribou hunt.

So he lay for a good while trying to account for his strange surroundings until at last he became drowsy and was on the point of going to sleep when suddenly the entrance flap of the wigwam opened and two Indians entered—the most savage looking men Bob had ever seen—and he felt a thrill of fear as he beheld them. They were very tall, slender, sinewy fellows, dressed in snug fitting deerskin coats reaching half way to the knees and decorated with elaborately painted designs in many colours. Their heads were covered with hairy hoods, and the ears of the animal from which they were made gave a grotesque and savage appearance to the wearers. Light fitting buckskin leggings, fringed on the outer side, encased their legs, and a pair of deerskin mittens dangled from the ends of a string which was slung around the neck. One of the men was past middle age, the other a young fellow of perhaps twenty.

The older woman said something to them and they began to jabber in so high a tone of voice that Bob would have thought they were quarrelling but for the fact that they laughed good-naturedly all the time and came right over to where he lay to shake his hand. They had a good deal to say to him, but he could not understand one word of their language. After greeting him both men removed their outer coats and hoods, and Bob could not but admire the graceful, muscular forms that the buckskin undergarments displayed. Their hair was long, black and straight and around their foreheads was tied a thong of buckskin to keep it from falling over their faces.

They laughed at Bob's inability to understand them, and were much amused when he tried to talk with them. Every effort was made to put him at ease.

When the men were finally seated, the girl dipped out a cup of broth and a dish of venison stew from the kettle which she handed to Bob; then the others helped themselves from what remained. There was no bread nor tea, and nothing to eat but the unflavoured meat.

It was quite dark now and the fire cast weird

uncanny shadows on the dimly-lighted interior walls of the wigwam. The Indians sitting around it in their peculiar dress seemed like unreal inhabitants of some spirit world. Bob's coming to himself in this place and amongst these people appealed to him as miraculous—supernatural. He could not understand it at all. He began to plan an escape. When they were all asleep he could steal quietly out and make his way back to the tilt. But, then, he reasoned, if they wished to detain him they could easily track him in the snow in the morning; and, besides, he did not know where his snow-shoes were and without them he could not go far. Neither did he know how far he was from the tilt. After the Indians had found him they may have carried him several days' journey to their camp and whether they had gone west or north he had no way of finding out.

It was, therefore, he realized, an unquestionably hopeless undertaking for him to attempt to reach his tilt alone, and he finally dismissed the idea as impracticable. Perhaps in the morning he could induce them to take him there. That, he concluded, was the only plan for him to follow So far they had been very kind and he

could see no reason why they should wish to detain him against his will.

The Indians were indeed Nascaupee Indians, but instead of being the ruthless cut-throats that the Mountaineers and the legends of the coast had painted them, they were human and hospitable, as all our eastern Indians were before white men taught them to be thieves and drove and goaded them—by the white man's own treachery —to acts of reprisal and revenge.

These Nascaupees, living as they did in a country inaccessible to the white ravishers, had none but kindly motives in their treatment of Bob and had no desire to do him harm. On the morning that Bob fell in the snow Shish-e-tá-ku-shin—Loud-voice—and his son Moó-koo-mahn—Big Knife—had left their wigwam early to hunt. Not far away they crossed Bob's trail. Their practiced eye told them that the traveller was not an Indian, for the snow-shoes he wore were not of Indian make, and also, from the uncertain, wobbly trail, they decided that he was far spent. So they followed the tracks and within a few minutes after Bob had fallen found him. They carried him to the wigwam and rubbed his frosted limbs and face until it was quite safe to

wrap him in the deerskins in the warm wigwam.

They did not know who he was nor where he came from, but they did know that he needed care and several days of quiet. He was a stranger and they took him in. These poor heathens had never heard of Christ or His teachings, but their hearts were human. And so it was that Bob found himself amongst friends and was rescued from what seemed certain death.

When morning came Bob tried in every conceivable way to make them understand that he wished to be taken back, but he found it a quite hopeless task. No signs or pantomime could make them comprehend his meaning, and it appeared that he was doomed to remain with them. The shock of exposure had been so great that he was still very weak and not able to walk, as he quickly realized when he tried to move about, and he was compelled to remain within in the company of the women, in spite of his desire to go out and reconnoitre.

Ma-ni-ka-wan, the maiden, took it upon herself to be his nurse. She brought him water to bathe his face, which was very sore from frost-

bite, and gave him the choicest morsels from the kettle, and made him as comfortable as possible.

At first he held a faint hope that when Bill missed him at the tilt, a search would be made for him and his friends would find the wigwam. But as the days slipped by he realized that he would probably never be discovered. There came a fear that the news of his disappearance would be carried to Wolf Bight and he dreaded the effect upon his mother and Emily.

But there was one consolation. Emily could go to the hospital now and be cured. Bill would find the silver fox skin and his share of that and the other furs would pay not only his own but his father's debts, he felt sure, as well as all the expense of Emily's treatment by the doctor—and a good surplus of cash—how much he could not imagine and did not try to calculate—for the doctor had said that silver foxes were worth five hundred dollars in cash. This thought gave him a degree of satisfaction that towered so far above his troubles that he almost forgot them.

In a little while he was quite strong and active again. Finally a day came when the Indians made preparations to move. The wigwam was

taken down and with all their belongings packed upon toboggans, and under the cold stars of a January morning, they turned to the northward, and Bob had no other course than to go with them even farther from the loved ones and the home that his heart so longed to see.

XIII

A FOREBODING OF EVIL

NEVER before had Bob been away from home for more than a week at a time, and his mother and Emily were very lonely after his departure in September. They missed his rough good-natured presence with the noise and confusion that always followed him no less than his little thoughtful attentions. They forgot the pranks that the overflow of his young blood sometimes led him into, remembering only his gentler side. He had helped Emily to pass the time less wearily, often sitting for hours at a time by her couch, telling her stories or joking with her, or making plans for the future, and she felt his absence now perhaps more than even his mother. Many times during the first week or so after his going she found herself turning wistfully towards the door half expecting to see him enter, at the hours when he used to come back from the fishing, and then she would realize that he was really gone away, and would turn her face to the wall,

that her mother might not see her, and cry quietly in her loneliness.

Without Bob's help, Richard Gray was very busy now. The fishing season was ended, but there was wood to be cut and much to be done in preparation for the long winter close at hand. He went early each morning to his work, and only returned to the cabin with the dusk of evening. This home-coming of the father was the one bright period of the day for Emily, and during the dreary hours that preceded it, she looked forward with pleasure and longing to the moment when he should open the door, and call out to her,

"An' how's my little maid been th'day? Has she been lonesome without her daddy?"

And she would always answer, "I's been fine, but dreadful lonesome without daddy."

Then he would kiss her, and sit down for a little while by her couch, before he ate his supper, to tell her of the trivial happenings out of doors, while he caressed her by stroking her hair gently back from her forehead. After the meal the three would chat for an hour or so while he smoked his pipe and Mrs. Gray washed the dishes. Then before they went to their rest

he would laboriously read a selection from the Bible, and afterwards, on his knees by Emily's couch, thank God for His goodness to them and ask for His protection, always ending with the petition,

"An', Lard, look after th' lad an' keep he safe from th' Nascaupees an' all harm; an' heal th' maid an' make she well, for, Lard, you must be knowin' what a good little maid she is."

Emily never heard this prayer without feeling an absolute confidence that it would be answered literally, for God was very real to her, and she had the complete, unshattered faith of childhood.

Late in October the father went to his trapping trail, and after that was only home for a couple of days each fortnight. There was no pleasant evening hour now for Emily and her mother to look forward to. The men of the bay were all away at their hunting trails, and no callers ever came to break the monotony of their life, save once in a while Douglas Campbell would tramp over the ice the eight miles from Kenemish to spend an afternoon and cheer them up.

Emily missed Bob more than ever, since her father had gone, but she was usually very patient and cheerful. For hours at a time she would

think of his home-coming, and thrill with the joy of it. In her fancy she would see him as he would look when he came in after his long absence, and in her imagination picture the days and days of happiness that would follow while he sat by her couch and told her of his adventures in the far off wilderness. Once, late in November, she called her mother to her and asked:

"Mother, how long will it be now an' Bob comes home?"

"'Tis many months till th' open water, but I were hopin', dear, that mayhap he'd be comin' at th' New Year."

"An' how long may it be to th' New Year, mother?"

"A bit more than a month, but 'tis not certain he'll be comin' then."

"'Tis a long while t' wait—a *terrible* long while t' be waitin'—t' th' New Year."

"Not so long, Emily. Th' time'll be slippin' by before we knows. But don't be countin' on his comin' th' New Year, for 'tis a rare long cruise t' th' Big Hill trail an' he may be waitin' till th' break-up. But I'm thinkin' my lad'll be wantin' t' see how th' little maid is,—an' see his mother—an' mayhap be takin' th' cruise."

"An Bob knew how lonesome we were—how *wonderful* lonesome we were—he'd be comin' at th' New Year sure. An' he'll be gettin' lonesome hisself. He must be gettin' *dreadful* lonesome away off in th' bush this long time! He'll *sure* be comin' at th' New Year!"

After this Emily began to keep account of the days as they passed. She had her mother reckon for her the actual number until New Year's Eve, and each morning she would say, "only so many days now an' Bob'll be comin' home." Her mother warned her that it was not at all certain he would come then—only a hope. But it grew to be a settled fact for Emily, and a part of her daily life, to expect and plan for the happy time when she should see him.

Mrs. Gray had not been able to throw off entirely the foreboding of calamity that she had voiced at the time Bob left home. Every morning she awoke with a heavy heart, like one bearing a great weight of sorrow. Before going about her daily duties she would pray for the preservation of her son and the healing of her daughter, and it would relieve her burden somewhat, but never wholly The strange Presence was always with her.

One day when Douglas Campbell came over he found her very despondent, and he asked:

"Now what's troublin' you, Mary? There's some trouble on yer mind. Don't be worryin' about th' lad. He's as safe as you be. He'll be comin' home as fine an' hearty as ever you see him, an' with a fine hunt."

"I knows the's no call for th' worry," she answered, "but someways I has a forebodin' o' somethin' evil t' happen an' I can't shake un off. I can't tell what un be. Mayhap 'tis th' maid. She's no better, an' th' Lard's not answerin' my prayer yet t' give back strength t' she an' make she walk."

"'Twill be all right wi' th' maid, now. Th' doctor said they'd be makin' she well at th' hospital."

"But the's no money t' send she t' th' hospital —an' if she don't go—th' doctor said she'd never be gettin' well."

"Now don't be lettin' *that* worry ye, Mary. Th' Lard'll be findin' a way t' send she t' St. Johns when th' mail boat comes back in th' spring, if that be His way o' curin sne—I *knows* He will. Th' Lard always does things right an' He'll be fixin' it right for th' maid. He'd not be

lettin a pretty maid like Emily go all ner life wi'out walkin'—He *never* would do that. I'm thinkin' He'd a' found a way afore *now* if th' mail boat had been makin' another trip before th' freeze up."

"I'm lackin' in faith, I'm fearin'. I'm always forgettin' that th' Lard does what's best for us an' don't always do un th' way we wants He to He's bidin' His own time I'm thinkin', an' an swerin' my prayers th' way as is best."

This talk with Douglas made her feel better, but still there was that burden on her heart—a burden that would not be shaken off.

All the Bay was frozen now, and white, like the rest of the world, with drifted snow. The great box stove in the cabin was kept well filled with wood night and day to keep out the searching cold. An inch-thick coat of frost covered the inner side of the glass panes of the two windows and shut out the morning sunbeams that used to steal across the floor to brighten the little room December was fast drawing to a close.

Richard Gray's luck had changed. Fur was plentiful—more plentiful than it had been for years—and he was hopeful that by spring he would have enough to pay all his back debt at

the company store and be on his feet again Two days before Christmas he reached home in high good humour, with the pelts he had caught, and displayed them with satisfaction to Mrs. Gray and Emily—beautiful black otters, martens, minks and beavers with a few lynx and a couple of red foxes.

"I'll be stayin' home for a fortnight t' get some more wood cut," he announced. "How'll that suit th' maid?"

"Oh! 'Tis fine!" cried the child, clapping her hands with delight. "An' Bob'll be home for the New Year an' we'll all be havin' a fine time together before you an' Bob goes away again."

"In th' mornin' I'll have t' be goin' t' th' Post wi' th' dogs an' komatik t' get some things. Is there anything yer wantin', Mary?" he asked his wife.

"We has plenty o' flour an' molasses an' tea; but," she suggested, "th' next day's Christmas, Richard."

"Aye, I'm thinkin' o' un an' I may be seein' Santa Claus t' tell un what a rare fine maid Emily's been an' ask un not t' be forgettin' she. He's been wonderful forgetful not t' be comin'

round last Christmas an' th' Christmas before I'll have t' be remindin' he."

Emily looked up wistfully.

"An' you are thinkin' he'll have *time* t' come here wi' all th' places t' go to? Oh, I'm wishin' he would!"

"I'll just make un—I'll just *make* un," said her father. "I'll not let un pass my maid *every* time."

Emily was awake early the next morning—before daybreak. Her father was about to start for the Post, and the dogs were straining and jumping in the traces. She knew this because she could hear their expectant howls,—and the dogs never howled just like that under any other circumstances. Then she heard "hoo-ett—hoo-ett" as he gave them the word to be off and, in the distance, as he turned them down the brook to the right his shouts of "ouk! ouk! ouk!—ouk! ouk! ouk!"

It was a day of delightful expectancy. To-morrow would be Christmas and perhaps—perhaps—Santa Claus would come! She chattered all day to her mother about it, wondering if he would really come and what he would bring her.

Finally, just at nightfall she heard her father shouting at the dogs outside and presently he

came in carrying his komatik box, his beard weighted with ice and his clothing white with hoar frost.

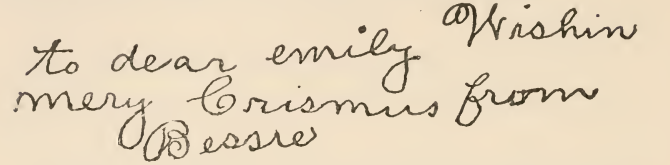
"Well," announced he, as he put down the box and pulled his adikey over his head, "I were seein' Santa Claus th' day an' givin' he a rare scoldin' for passin' my maid by these two year—a *rare* scoldin'—an' I'm thinkin' he'll not be passin' un by *this* Christmas. He'll not be wantin' *another* such scoldin'."

"Oh!" said Emily, "'twere too bad t' scold un. He must be havin' a wonderful lot o' places t' go to an' he's not deservin' t' be scolded now. He's sure doin' th' best he can—I *knows* he's doin' th' best he can."

"He were deservin' of un, an' more. He were passin' my maid *two* year runnin' an' I can't be havin' that," insisted the father as he hung up his adikey and stooped to open the komatik box, from which he extracted a small package which he handed to Emily saying, "Somethin' Bessie were sendin'."

"Look! Look, mother!" Emily cried excitedly as she undid the package and discovered a bit of red ribbon; "a hair ribbon an'—an' a paper with some writin'!"

Mrs. Gray duly examined and admired the gift while Emily spelled out the message.



"Oh an' Bessie's fine t' be rememberin' me!" said she, adding regretfully, "I'm wishin' I'd been sendin she somethin' but I hasn't a thing t' send."

"Aye, Bessie's a fine lass," said her father. "She sees me comin' an' runs down t' meet me, an' asks how un be, an' if we're hearin' e'er a word from Bob. An' I tells she Emily's fine an we're not hearin' from Bob, but are thinkin' un may be comin' home for th' New Year. An' then Bessie says as she's wantin' t' come over at th' New Year t' visit Emily."

"An' why weren't you askin' she t' come back with un th' day?" asked Mrs. Gray.

"Oh, I wish she had!" exclaimed Emily.

"I were askin' she," he explained, "but she were thinkin' she'd wait till th' New Year. Her mother's rare busy th' week wi' th' men all in from th' bush, an' needin' Bessie's help."

"An' how's th' folk findin' th' fur?" asked Mrs. Gray as she poured the tea.

"Wonderful fine. Wonderful fine with all un as be in."

"An' I'm glad t' hear un. 'Twill be givin' th folk a chance t' pay th' debts. Th' two bad sea sons must ha' put most of un in a bad way for debt."

"Aye, 'twill that. An' now we're like t' have two fine seasons. 'Tis th' way un always runs."

"'Tis th' Lard's way," said Mrs. Gray reverently.

"The's a band o' Injuns come th' day," added Richard Gray, "an' they reports fur rare plenty inside, as 'tis about here. An' I'm thinkin' Bob'll be doin' fine his first year in th' bush."

"Oh, I'm hopin'—I'm hopin' so—for th' lad's sake an' Emily's. 'Tis how th' Lard's makin' a way for th' brave lad t' send Emily t' th' doctor —an' he comes back safe."

"I were askin' th' Mountaineers had they seen Nascaupee footin', an' they seen none. They're sayin' th' Nascaupees has been keepin' t' th' nuth'ard th' winter, an' we're not t' fear for th' lad."

"Thank th' Lard!" exclaimed Mrs. Gray. "Thank th' Lard! An' now that's relievin' my mind wonderful—relievin'—it—wonderful."

There was an added earnestness to Richard Gray's expressions of thanksgiving when he knelt with his wife by their child's couch for family worship that Christmas eve, and there was an unwonted happiness in their hearts when they went to their night's rest.

XIV

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

THE kettle was singing merrily on the stove, and Mrs. Gray was setting the breakfast table, when Emily awoke on Christmas morning. Her father was just coming in from out-of-doors bringing a breath of the fresh winter air with him.

"A Merry Christmas," he called to her. "A Merry Christmas t' my maid!"

"And did Santa Claus come?" she asked, looking around expectantly.

"Santa Claus? There now!" he exclaimed, "an' has th' old rascal been forgettin' t' come again? Has you seen any signs o' Santa Claus bein' here?" he asked of Mrs. Gray, as though thinking of it for the first time. Then, turning towards the wall back of the stove, he exclaimed, "Ah! Ah! an' what's *this?*"

Emily looked, and there, sitting upon the shelf, was a doll!

"Ch! Oh, th' dear little thing!" she cried "Oh, let me have un!"

Mrs. Gray took it down and handed it to her, and she hugged it to her in an ecstasy of delight. Then she held it off and looked at it, and hugged again, and for very joy she wept. It was only a poor little rag doll with face and hair grotesquely painted upon the cloth, and dressed in printed calico—but it was a doll—a *real* one—the first that Emily had ever owned. It had been the dream of her life that some day she might have one, and now the dream was a blessed reality. Her happiness was quite beyond expression as she lay there on her bed that Christmas morning pressing the doll to her breast and crying. Poverty has its seasons of recompense that more than counterbalance all the pleasures that wealth can buy, and this was one of those seasons for the family of Richard Gray.

Presently Emily stopped crying, and through the tears came laughter, and she held the toy out for her father and mother to take and examine and admire.

A little later Mrs. Gray came from the closet holding a mysterious package in her hand.

"Now what be *this?* 'Twere in th' closet an' looks like somethin' more Santa Claus were leavin'."

"Well now!" exclaimed Richard, "what may *that* be? Open un an' we'll see."

An investigation of its contents revealed a couple of pounds of sugar, some currants, raisins and a small can of butter.

"Santa Claus were wantin' us t' have a plum puddin' *I'm* thinkin'," said Mrs. Gray, as she examined each article and showed it to Emily "An' we're t' have sugar for th' tea and butter for th' bread. But th' puddin's not t' get *all* th' raisins. Emily's t' have some t' eat after we has breakfast."

Dinner was a great success. There were roast ptarmigans stuffed with fine-chopped pork and bread, and the unwonted luxuries of butter and sugar—and then the plum pudding served with molasses for sauce. That was fine, and Emily had to have two helpings of it. If Bob had been with them their cup of happiness would have been filled quite to the brim, and more than once Emily exclaimed:

"Now if *Bob* was only here!" And several times during the day she said, "I'm just *wishin'* t' show Bob my pretty doll—an' won't he be glad t' see un!"

The report from the Mountaineer Indians that

no Nascaupees had been seen had set at rest their fears for the lad's safety. The apprehension that he might get into the hands of the Nascaupees had been the chief cause of worry, for they felt full confidence in Bob's ability to cope with the wilderness itself.

The day was so full of surprises and new sensations that when bedtime came Emily was quite tired out with the excitement of it all, and was hardly able to keep awake until the family worship was closed. Then she went to sleep with the doll in her arms.

The week from Christmas till New Year passed quickly. Richard Gray was at home, and this was a great treat for Mrs. Gray and Emily, and with several of their neighbours who lived within ten to twenty miles of Wolf Bight driving over with dogs to spend a few hours—for most of the men were home from their traps for the holidays—the time was pretty well filled up. Emily's doll was a never failing source of amusement to her, and she always slept with it in her arms.

Over at the Post it was a busy week for Mr. MacDonald and his people, for all the Bay hunters and Indians had trading to do, and most of

them remained at least one night to gossip and discuss their various prospects and enjoy the hospitality of the kitchen; and then there was a dance nearly every night, for this was their season of amusement and relaxation in the midst of the months of bitter hardships on the trail.

Bessie and her mother had not a moment to themselves, with all the extra cooking and cleaning to be done, for it fell upon them to provide for every one; and it became quite evident to Bessie that she could not get away for her proposed visit to Wolf Bight until the last of the hunters was gone. This would not be until the day after New Year's, so she postponed her request to her father, to take her over, until New Year's day. Then she watched for a favourable opportunity when she was alone with him and her mother. Finally it came late in the afternoon, when he stepped into the house for something, and she asked him timidly:

"Father, I'm wantin' t' go on a cruise t' Wolf Bight—t' see Emily—can't you take me over with th' dogs an' komatik?"

"When you wantin' t' go, lass?" he asked

"I'm wishin' t' be goin' to-morrow"

"I'm t' be wonderful busy for a few days Can't un wait a week or two?"

"I'm wantin' t' go now, father, if I goes. I'm not wantin' t' wait."

"Bob's t' be home," suggested Mrs. Blake

"Oh, ho! I see!" he exclaimed. "'Tisn't Bob instead o' Emily you're wantin' so wonderful bad t' see now, is un?"

"'Tis—Emily—I'm wantin'—t'—see," faltered Bessie, blushing prettily and fingering the hem of her apron in which she was suddenly very much interested.

"Bob's a fine lad—a fine lad—an' I'm not wonderin'," said her father teasingly.

"Now, Tom," interceded Mrs. Black, "don't be tormentin' Bessie. O' course 'tis just Emily she's wantin' t' see. She's not thinkin' o' th' lads yet."

"Oh, aye," said he, looking slyly out of the corner of his eye at Bessie, who was blushing now to the very roots of her hair, "I'm not blamin' she for likin' Bob. I likes he myself."

"Well, Tom, be tellin' th' lass you'll take she over. She's been kept wonderful close th' winter, an' the cruise 'll be doin' she good," urged Mrs. Black.

"I wants t' go *so* much," Bessie pleaded.

"Well, I'll ask Mr. MacDonald can he spare me th' day. I'm thinkin' 'twill be all right," he finally assented.

And it was all right. When the last hunter had disappeared the next morning, the komatik was got ready. A box made for the purpose was lashed on the back end of it, and warm reindeer skins spread upon the bottom for Bessie to sit upon. Then the nine big dogs were called by shouting "Ho! Ho! Ho!" to them, and were caught and harnessed, after which Tom cracked a long walrus-hide whip over their heads, and made them lie quiet until Bessie was tucked snugly in the box, and wrapped well in deerskin robes.

When at last all was ready the father stepped aside with his whip, and immediately the dogs were up jumping and straining in their harness and giving short impatient howls, over eager to be away. Tom grasped the front end of the komatik runners, pulled them sharply to one side to break them loose from the snow to which they were frozen, and instantly the dogs were off at a gallop running like mad over the ice with the trailing komatik in imminent danger of turn

ing over when it struck the ice hummocks that the tide had scattered for some distance out from the shore.

Presently they calmed down, however, to a jog trot, and Tom got off the komatik and ran by its side, guiding the team by calling out "ouk" when he wanted to turn to the right and "rudder" to turn to the left, repeating the words many times in rapid succession as though trying to see how fast he could say them. The head dog, or leader, always turned quickly at the word of command, and the others followed.

It was a very cold day—fifty degrees below zero Mr. MacDonald had said before they started—and Bessie's father looked frequently to see that her nose and cheeks were not freezing, for a traveller in the northern country when not exercising violently will often have these parts of the face frozen without knowing it or even feeling cold, and if the wind is blowing in the face is pretty sure to have them frosted anyway.

Most of the snow had drifted off the ice, and the dogs had a good hard surface to travel upon, and were able to keep up a steady trot. They made such good time that in two hours they turned into Wolf Bight, and as they approached

the Grays' cabin broke into a gallop, for dogs always like to begin a journey and end it with a flourish of speed just to show how fast they *can* go, no matter how slowly they may jog along between places.

The dogs at Wolf Bight were out to howl defiance at them as they approached and to indulge in a free fight with the newcomers when they arrived, until the opposing ones were beaten apart with clubs and whips. It is a part of a husky dog's religion to fight whenever an excuse offers, and often when there is no excuse.

Richard and Mrs. Gray came running out to meet Tom and Bessie, and Bessie was hurried into the cabin where Emily was waiting in excited expectancy to greet her. Mrs. Gray bustled about at once and brewed some hot tea for the visitors and set out a luncheon of bread for them.

"Now set in an' have a hot drink t' warm un up," said she when it was ready. "You must be most froze, Bessie, this frosty day."

"I were warm wrapped in th' deerskins, an' not so cold," Bessie answered.

"We were lookin' for Bob these three days," remarked Mrs Gray as she poured the tea

"We were thinkin' he'd sure be gettin' lonesome by now, an' be makin' a cruise out."

"'Tis a long cruise from th' Big Hill trail unless he were needing somethin'," suggested Tom, taking his seat at the table.

"Aye," assented Richard, "an' I'm thinkin' th' lad'll not be wantin' t' lose th' time 'twill take t' come out. He'll be biding inside t' make th' most o' th' huntin', an' th' fur be plenty."

"That un will," agreed Tom, "an' 'twould not be wise for un t' be losin' a good three weeks o' huntin'. Bob's a workin' lad, an' I'm not thinkin' you'll see he till open water comes."

"Oh," broke in Emily, "an' don't un *really* think Bob's t' come? I been wishin' *so* for un, an' 'twould be grand t' have he come while Bessie's here."

"Bessie's thinkin' 'twould too," said Tom, who could not let pass an opportunity to tease his daughter.

They all looked at Bessie, who blushed furiously, but said nothing, realizing that silence was the best means of diverting her father's attention from the subject, and preventing his further remarks.

"Well I'll have t' be goin'," said Tom presently, pushing back from the table.

"Oh, sit down, man, an' bide a bit. There's nothin' t' take un back so soon. Bide here th' night, can't un?" urged Richard.

"I were sayin' t' Mr. MacDonald as I'd be back t' th' post th' day, so promisin' I has t' go."

"Aye, an' un promised, though I were hopin' t' have un bide th' night."

"When'll I be comin' for un, Bessie?" asked Tom.

"Oh, Bessie must be bidin' a *long* time," plead Emily. "I've been wishin' t' have she *so* much Please be leavin' she a *long* time."

"Mother'll be needin' me I'm thinkin' in a week," said Bessie, "though I'd like t' bide longer."

"Your mother'll not be needin' un, now th' men's gone. Bide wi' Emily a fortnight," her father suggested.

"I'll take th' lass over when she's wantin' t' go," said Richard. "'Tis a rare treat t' Emily t' have she here, an' th' change'll be doin' your lass good."

So it was agreed, and Tom drove away.

It was a terrible disappointment to Emily and

her mother that Bob did not come, but Bessie's visit served to mitigate it to some extent, and her presence brightened the cabin very much.

No one knew whether or not Bob's failure to appear was regretted by Bessie. That was her secret. However it may have been, she had a splendid visit with Mrs. Gray and Emily, and the days rolled by very pleasantly, and when Richard Gray left for his trail again on the Monday morning following her arrival the thought that Bessie was with "th' little maid" gave him a sense of quiet satisfaction and security that he had not felt when he was away from them earlier in the winter.

When Douglas Campbell came over one morning a week after Bessie's arrival he found the atmosphere of gloom that he had noticed on his earlier visits had quite disappeared. Mrs. Gray seemed contented now, and Emily was as happy as could be.

Douglas remained to have dinner with them. They had just finished eating and he had settled back to have a smoke before going home, admiring a new dress that Bessie had made for Emily's doll, and talking to the child, while Mrs. Gray and Bessie cleared away the dishes, when the

door opened and Ed Matheson appeared on the threshold.

Ed stood in the open door speechless, his face haggard and drawn, and his tall thin form bent slightly forward like a man carrying a heavy burden upon his shoulders.

It was not necessary for Ed to speak. The moment Mrs. Gray saw him she knew that he was the bearer of evil news. She tottered as though she would fall, then recovering herself she extended her arms towards him and cried in agony:

"Oh, my lad! My lad! What has happened to my lad!"

"Bob—Bob"—faltered Ed, "th'—wolves—got—un."

He had nerved himself for this moment, and now the spell was broken he sat down upon a bench, and with his elbows upon his knees and his face in his big weather-browned hands, cried like a child.

Emily lay white and wild-eyed. She could not realize it all or understand it. It seemed for a moment as though Mrs. Gray would faint, and Bessie, pale but self-possessed, supported her to a seat and tried gently to soothe her.

Douglas, too, did what he could to comfort, though there was little that he could do or say to relieve the mother's grief.

At first Mrs. Gray simply moaned, "My lad—my lad—my lad——" upbraiding herself for ever letting him go away from home; but finally tears—the blessed safety-valve of grief—came and washed away the first effects of the shock.

Then she became quite calm, and insisted upon hearing every smallest detail of Ed's story, and he related what had happened step by step, beginning with the arrival of himself and Dick at the river tilt on Christmas eve and the discovery that Bob's furs had been removed, and passed on to the finding of the remains by the big boulder in the marsh, Mrs. Gray interrupting now and again to ask a fuller explanation here and there.

When Ed told of gathering up the fragments of torn clothing, she asked to see them at once. Ed hesitated, and Douglas suggested that she wait until a later time when her nerves were steadier; but she was determined, and insisted upon seeing them without delay, and there was nothing to do but produce them. Contrary to their expectations, she made no scene when they

were placed before her, and though her hand trembled a little was quite collected as she took up the blood-stained pieces of cloth and examined them critically one by one. Finally she raised her head and announced :

"None o' *them* were ever a part o' Bob's clothes"

"Whose now may un be if not Bob's?" asked Ed, sceptical of her decision.

"None of un were *Bob's*. I were makin' all o' Bob's clothes, an'—I—*knows:* I *knows*," she insisted.

"But th' flat sled were Bob's, an' th' tent an' other things," said Ed.

"Th' *clothes* were not Bob's—an' Bob were not killed by wolves—my lad is livin'—somewheres —I *feels* my lad is livin'," she asserted.

Then Ed told of the two axes found—one on the toboggan and the other on the snow—and Mrs. Gray raised another question.

"Why," she asked, "had he two axes?"

It was explained that he had probably taken one in on a previous trip and cached it. But she argued that if he needed an axe going in on the previous trip he must have needed it coming out too, and it was not likely that he would have

cached it. Besides, she was quite sure that he had but one axe with him in the bush, as there was no extra axe for him to take when he was leaving home; and Douglas said that when he left the trail at the close of the previous season he had left no axe in any of the tilts.

"Richard 'll know un when he comes," said she. "Richard'll know Bob's axe."

The mother was still more positive now that the remains they had found were not Bob's remains, and Ed and Douglas, though equally positive that she was mistaken, let her hold the hope —or rather belief—that Bob still lived. She asserted that he was alive as one states a fact that one knows is beyond question. The circumstantial evidence against her theory was strong, but a woman's intuition stands not for reason, and her conclusions she will hold against the world.

"I must be takin' th' word in t' Richard though tis a sore trial t' do it," said Douglas, preparing at once to go. "I'll be findin' un on th' trail. Keep courage, Mary, until we comes. 'Twill be but four days at furthest," he added as he was going out of the door.

Ed left immediately after for his home, to spend a day or two before returning to his in-

land trail, and Mrs. Gray and Emily and Bessie were left alone again in a gloom of sorrow that approached despair.

That night long after the light was out and they had gone to bed, Mrs. Gray, who was still lying awake with her trouble, heard Emily softly speak:

"Mother."

She stole over to Emily's couch and kissed the child's cheek.

"Mother, an' th' wolves killed Bob, won't he be an angel now?"

"Bob's livin'—somewheres—child, an' I'm prayin' th' Lard in His mercy t' care of th' lad. Th' Lard knows where un is, lass, an' th' Lard'll sure not be forgettin' he."

"But," she insisted, "he's an angel now *if* th' wolves killed un?"

"Yes, dear."

"An' th' Lard lets angels come sometimes t' see th' ones they loves, don't He, mother?"

"Be quiet now, lass."

"But He does?" persisted the child.

"Aye, He does."

"Then if Bob were killed, mother, he'll sure be comin' t' see us. His angel'd never be restin'

easy in heaven wi'out comin' t' see us, for he knows how sore we longs t' see un."

The mother drew the child to her heart and sobbed.

XV

IN THE WIGWAM OF SISHETAKUSHIN

DAY after day the Indians travelled to the northward, drawing their goods after them on toboggans, over frozen rivers and lakes, or through an ever scantier growth of trees. With every mile they traversed Bob's heart grew heavier in his bosom, for he was constantly going farther from home, and the prospect of return was fading away with each sunset. He knew that they were moving northward, for always the North Star lay before them when they halted for the night, and always a wilder, more unnatural country surrounded them. Finally a westerly turn was taken, and he wondered what their goal might be.

Cold and bitter was the weather. The great limitless wilderness was frozen into a deathlike silence, and solemn and awful was the vast expanse of white that lay everywhere around them. They, they alone, it seemed, lived in all the dreary world. The icy hand of January had crushed all other creatures into oblivion. No

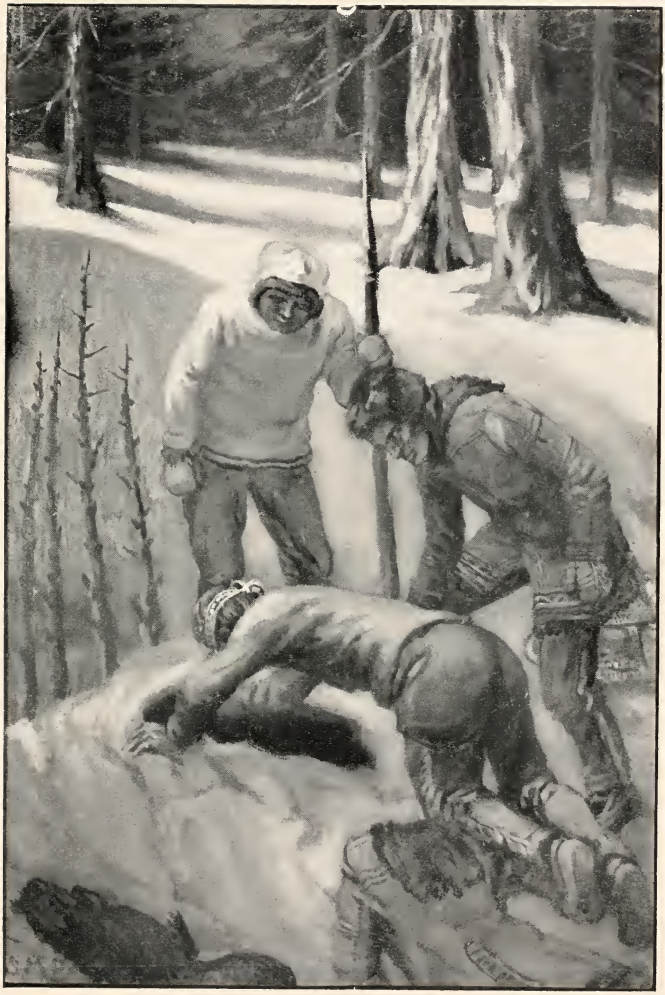
deer, no animals of any kind crossed their trail. Their food was going rapidly, and they were now reduced to a scanty ration of jerked venison.

At last they halted one day by the side of a brook and pitched their wigwam. Then leaving the women to cut wood and put the camp in order, the two Indians shouldered their guns and axes, and made signs to Bob to follow them, which he gladly did.

They ascended the frozen stream for several miles, when suddenly they came upon a beaver dam and the dome-shaped house of the animals themselves, nearly hidden under the deep covering of snow. The house had apparently been located earlier in the season, for now the Indians went directly to it as a place they were familiar with.

Here they began at once to clear away the snow from the ice at one side of the house, using their snow-shoes as shovels. When this was done, a pole was cut, and to the end of the pole a long iron spike was fastened. With this improvised implement Sishetakushin began to pick away the ice where the snow had been cleared from it, while Mookoomahn cut more poles.

Though the ice was fully four feet thick



"It was dangerous work"

Sishetakushin soon reached the water. Then the other poles that Mookoomahn had cut were driven in close to the house.

Bob understood that this was done to prevent the escape of the animals, and that they were closing the door, which was situated so far down that it would always be below the point where ice would form, so that the beavers could go in and out at will.

After these preparations were completed the Indians cleared the snow from the top of the beaver house, and then broke an opening into the house itself. Into this aperture Sishetakushin peered for a moment, then his hand shot down, and like a flash reappeared holding a beaver by the hind legs, and before the animal had recovered sufficiently from its surprise to bring its sharp teeth into action in self-defense, the Indian struck it a stinging blow over the head and killed it. Then in like manner another animal was captured and killed. It was dangerous work and called for agility and self-possession, for had the Indian made a miscalculation or been one second too slow the beaver's teeth, which crush as well as cut, would have severed his wrist or arm.

There were two more beavers—a male and a female—in the house, but these were left undisturbed to raise a new family, and the stakes that had closed the door were removed.

This method of catching beavers was quite new to Bob, who had always seen his father and the other hunters of the Bay capture them in steel traps It was his first lesson in the Indian method of hunting.

That evening the flesh of the beavers went into the kettle, and their oily tails—the greatest tidbit of all—were fried in a pan. The Indians made a feast time of it, and never ceased eating the livelong night. This day of plenty came in cheerful contrast to the cheerless nights with scanty suppers following the weary days of plodding that had preceded. The glowing fire in the centre, the appetizing smell of the kettle and sizzling fat in the pan, and the relaxation and mellow warmth as they reclined upon the boughs brought a sense of real comfort and content.

The next day they remained in camp and rested, but the following morning resumed the dreary march to the westward.

After many more days of travelling—Bob had lost all measure of time—they reached the shores

of a great lake that stretched away until in the far distance its smooth white surface and the sky were joined. The Indians pointed at the expanse of snow-covered ice, and repeated many times, "Petitsikapau—Petitsikapau," and Bob decided that this must be what they called the lake; but the name was wholly unfamiliar to him. In like manner they had indicated that a river they had travelled upon for some distance farther back, after crossing a smaller lake, was called "Ashuanipi," but he had never heard of it before.

The wigwam was pitched upon the shores of Petitsikapau Lake, where there was a thick growth of willows upon the tender tops of which hundreds of ptarmigans—the snow-white grouse of the arctic—were feeding; and rabbits had the snow tramped flat amongst the underbrush, offering an abundance of fresh food to the hunters, a welcome change from the unvaried fare of dried venison.

Bob drew from the elaborate preparations that were made that they were to stop here for a considerable time. Snow was banked high against the skin covering of the wigwam to keep out the wind more effectually, an unusually thick

bed of spruce boughs was spread within, and a good supply of wood was cut and neatly piled outside.

The women did all the heavy work and drudgery about camp, and it troubled Bob not a little to see them working while the men were idle. Several times he attempted to help them, but his efforts were met with such a storm of protestations and disapproval, not only from the men, but the women also, that he finally refrained.

"'Tis strange now th' women isn't wantin' t' be helped," Bob remarked to himself. "Mother's always likin' t' have me help she."

It was quite evident that the men considered this camp work beneath their dignity as hunters, and neither did they wish Bob, to whom they had apparently taken a great fancy, to do the work of a squaw. They had, to all appearances, accepted him as one of the family and treated him in all respects as such, and, he noted this with growing apprehension, as though he were always to remain with them.

They began now to initiate him into the mysteries of their trapping methods, which were quite different from those with which he was ac

customed. Instead of the steel trap they used the deadfall—wa-neé-gan—and the snare—nug-wah-gun—and Bob won the quick commendation and plainly shown admiration of the Indians by the facility with which he learned to make and use them, and his prompt success in capturing his fair share of martens, which were fairly numerous in the woods back of the lake.

But when he took his gun and shot some ptarmigans one day, they gave him to understand that this was a wasteful use of ammunition, and showed him how they killed the birds with bow and arrow. To shoot the arrows straight, however, was an art that he could not acquire readily, and his efforts afforded Sishetakushin and Mookoomahn much amusement.

"The's no shootin' straight wi' them things," Bob declared to himself, after several unsuccessful attempts to hit a ptarmigan. "Leastways I'm not knowin' how. But th' Injuns is shootin' un fine, an' I'm wonderin' now they does un."

With no one that could understand him Bob had unconsciously dropped into the habit of talking a great deal to himself. It was not very satisfactory, however, and there were always

questions arising that he wished to ask. He had, therefore, devoted himself since his advent amongst the Indians to learning their language and every day he acquired new words and phrases. Manikawan would pronounce the names of objects for him and have him repeat them after her until he could speak them correctly, laughing merrily at his blunders.

It does not require a large vocabulary to make oneself understood, and in an indescribably short time Bob had picked up enough Indian to converse brokenly, and one day, shortly after the arrival at Petitsikapau he found he was able to explain to Sishetakushin where he came from and his desire to return to the Big Hill trail and the Grand River country.

"It is not good to dwell on the great river of the evil spirits" (the Grand River), said the Indian. "Be contented in the wigwam of your brothers."

Bob parleyed and plead with them, and when he finally insisted that they take him back to the place where they had found him, he was met with the objection that it was "many sleeps towards the rising sun," that the deer had left the land as he had seen for himself, and if they

turned back their kettle would have no flesh and their stomachs would be empty.

"We are going," said Sishetakushin, "where the deer shall be found like the trees of the forest, and there our brother shall feast and be happy."

So Bob's last hope of reaching home vanished.

Manikawan's kindness towards him grew, and she was most attentive to his comfort. She gave him the first helping of "nab-wi"—stew—from the kettle, and kept his clothing in good repair. His old moccasins she replaced with new ones fancifully decorated with beads, and his much-worn duffel socks with warm ones made of rabbit skins. Everything that the wilderness provided he had from her hand. But still he was not happy. There was an always present longing for the loved ones in the little cabin at Wolf Bight. He never could get out of his mind his mother's sad face on the morning he left her, dear patient little Emily on her couch, and his father, who needed his help so much, working alone about the house or on the trail. And sometimes he wondered if Bessie ever thought of him, and if she would be sorry when she heard he was lost.

"Manikawan an' all th' Injuns be wonderful kind, but 'tis not like bein' home," he would often say sadly to himself when he lay very lonely at night upon his bed of boughs and skins.

At first Manikawan's attentions were rather agreeable to Bob, but he was not accustomed to being waited upon, and in a little while they began to annoy him and make him feel ill at ease, and finally to escape from them he rarely ever remained in the wigwam during daylight hours.

"I'm wishin' she'd not be troublin' wi' me so —I'm not wantin' un," he declared almost petulantly at times when the girl did something for him that he preferred to do himself.

Mornings he would wander down through the valley attending to his deadfalls and snares, and afternoons tramp over the hills in the hope of seeing caribou.

One afternoon two weeks after the arrival at Petitsikapau he was skirting a precipitous hill not far from camp, when suddenly the snow gave way under his feet and he slipped over a low ledge. He did not fall far, and struck a soft drift below, and though startled at the unexpected descent was not injured. When he got upon his feet again he noticed what seemed a

rather peculiar opening in the rock near the foot of the ledge, where his fall had broken away the snow, and upon examining it found that the crevice extended back some eight or ten feet and then broadened into a sort of cavern.

"'Tis a strange place t' be in th' rocks," he commented. "I'm thinkin' I'll have a look at un."

Kicking off his snow-shoes and standing his gun outside he proceeded to crawl in on all fours. When he reached the point of broadening he found the cavern within so dark that he could see nothing of its interior, and he advanced cautiously, extending one arm in front of him that he might not strike his head against protruding rocks. All at once his hand came in contact with something soft and warm. He drew it back with a jerk, and his heart stood still. He had touched the shaggy coat of a bear. He was in a bear's den and within two feet of the sleeping animal. He expected the next moment to be crushed under the paws of the angry beast, and was quite astonished when he found that it had not been aroused.

Cautiously and noiselessly Bob backed quickly out of the dangerous place. The moment he

was out and found himself on his feet again with his gun in his hands his courage returned, and he began to make plans for the capture of the animal.

"'Twould be fine now t' kill un an' 'twould please th' Injuns wonderful t' get th' meat," he said. "I'm wonderin' could I get un—if 'tis a bear."

He stooped and looked into the cave again, but it was as dark as night in there, and he could see nothing of the bear. Then he cut a long pole with his knife and reached in with it until he felt the soft body. A strong prod brought forth a protesting growl. Bruin did not like to have his slumbers disturbed.

"Sure *'tis* a bear an' that's wakenin' un," he commented.

Bob prodded harder and the growls grew louder and angrier.

"He's not wantin' t' get out o' bed," said Bob prodding vigorously.

Finally there was a movement within the den, and Bob sprang back and made ready with his gun. He had barely time to get into position when the head of an enormous black bear appeared in the cave entrance, its eyes flashing fire

and showing fight. Bob's heart beat excitedly, but he kept his nerve and took a steady aim. The animal was not six feet away from him when he fired. Then he turned and ran down the hill, never looking behind until he was fully two hundred yards from the den and realized that there was no sound in the rear.

The bear was not in sight and he cautiously retraced his steps until he saw the animal lying where it had fallen. The bullet had taken it squarely between the eyes and killed it instantly. This was the first bear that Bob had ever killed unaided and he was highly elated at his success.

It was not an easy task to get the carcass out of the rock crevice, but he finally accomplished it and outside quickly skinned the bear and cut the meat into pieces of convenient size to haul away on a toboggan when he should return for it. Then, with the skin as a trophy, he triumphantly turned towards camp.

Night had fallen when he reached the wigwam and Sishetakushin and Mookoomahn had already arrived after their day's hunt. It was a proud moment for Bob when he entered the lodge and threw down the bear skin for their in-

spection. They spread it out and examined it and a great deal of talking ensued. Bob, in the best Indian he could command, explained where he had found the "mushku" and how he had killed it, and his story was listened to with intense interest When he was through Sishetakushin said that the "Snow Brother," as they called Bob, was a great hunter, and should be an Indian; for only an Indian would have the courage to attack a bear in its den single handed. Bob had risen very perceptibly in their estimation. All doubt of his skill and prowess as a hunter had been removed. He had won a new place, and was now to be considered as their equal in the chase.

The following morning the two Indians assisted Bob to haul the bear's meat to camp. No part of it was allowed to waste. In the wigwam it was thawed and then the flesh stripped from the bones, and that not required for immediate use was permitted to freeze again that it might keep sweet until needed. The skull was thoroughly cleaned and fastened to a high branch of a tree as an offering to the Manitou. Sishetakushin explained to Bob that unless this was done the Great Spirit would punish them by

driving all other bears beyond the reach of their guns and traps in future.

For several days a storm had been threatening, and that night it broke with all the terrifying fury of the north. The wind shrieked through the forest and shook the wigwam as though it would tear it away. The air was filled with a swirling, blinding mass of snow and any one venturing a dozen paces from the lodge could hardly have found his way back to it again. For three days the storm lasted, and the Indians turned these three days into a period of feasting. A big kettle of bear's meat always hung over the fire, and surrounding it pieces of the meat were impaled upon sticks to roast. It seemed to Bob as though the Indians would never have enough to eat.

Finally the storm cleared, and then it was discovered that the ptarmigans and rabbits, which had been so plentiful and constituted their chief source of food supply, had disappeared as if by magic. Not a ptarmigan fluttered before the hunter, and no rabbit tracks broke the smooth white snow beneath the bushes.

The jerked venison was gone and the only food remaining was the bear meat. A hurried consultation was held, and it was decided to push on still

farther to the northward in the hope of meeting the invisible herds of caribou that somewhere in those limitless, frozen barrens were wandering unmolested.

XVI

ONE OF THE TRIBE

IF Bob Gray had held any secret hope that the Indians would eventually listen to his plea to guide him back to the Big Hill trail it was mercilessly swept away by the next move for again they faced steadily towards the north. Whenever he thought of home a lump came into his throat, but he always swallowed it bravely and said to himself:

"'Tis wrong now t' be grievin' when I has so much t' be thankful for. Bill'll be takin' th' silver fox an' other fur out, and when father sells un twill pay for Emily's goin' t' th' doctor. Th' Lard saved me from freezin', an' I'm well an' th' Injuns be wonderful good t' me. Maybe some time they'll be goin' back th' Big Hill way—maybe 'twill be next winter—an' then I'll be gettin' home."

In this manner the hope of youth always conquered, and his desperate situation was to some extent forgotten in the pictures he drew for him

self of his reunion with the loved ones in the uncertain "Sometime" of the future.

On and on they travelled through the endless, boundless white, over wind-swept rocky hills so inhospitably barren that even the snow could not find a lodgment on them, or over wide plains where the few trees that grew had been stunted and gnarled into mere shrubs by winter blasts. On every hand the mountains began to raise their ragged austere heads like grim giant sentinels placed there to guard the way. Finally they turned into a pass, which brought them, on the other side of the ridge it led through, to a comparatively well-wooded valley down which a wide river wound its way northward. The trees were larger than any Bob had seen since leaving the Big Hill trail, and this new valley seemed almost familiar to him.

As they emerged from the pass a wolf cry long and weird, came from a distant mountain-side and broke the wilderness stillness, which had become almost insufferable, and to the lad even this wild cry held a note of companionship that was pleasant to hear after the long and death-like quiet that had prevailed.

They took to the river ice and travelled on it fo-

several miles when, rounding a bend, they suddenly came upon a cluster of half a dozen deerskin wigwams standing in the spruce trees just above the river bank. An Indian from one of the lodges discovered their approach, and gave a shout. Instantly men, women and children sprang into view and came running out to welcome them. It was a curious, medley crowd. The men were clad in long, decorated deerskin coats such as Sishetakushin and Mookoomahn wore, and the women in deerskin skirts reaching a little way below the knees, and all wearing the fringed buckskin leggings.

The greeting was cordial and noisy, everybody shaking hands with the new arrivals, talking in the high key characteristic of them, and laughing a great deal. Two of the men embraced Sishetakushin and Mookoomahn and shed copious tears of joy over them. These two men it appeared were Mookoomahn's brothers. The women were not so demonstrative, but showed their delight in a ceaseless flow of words.

When the first greetings were over Sishetakushin told the assembled Indians how Bob had been found sleeping in the snow, and that the Great Spirit had sent the White Snow Brother

to dwell in their lodges as one of them. After this introduction and a rather magnified description of his accomplishments as a hunter they all shook Bob's hand and welcomed him as one of the tribe.

A few caribou had been killed, and the travellers received gifts of the frozen meat with a good proportion of fat, and that night a great feast was held in their behalf.

With plenty to eat there was no occasion to hunt and the Indians were living in idleness during the intensely cold months of January and February, rarely venturing out of the wigwams. This was not only for their comfort, but because the fur bearing animals lie quiet during this cold period of the winter and the hunt would therefore yield small reward for the exposure and suffering it would entail.

They had an abundance of tobacco and tea. Sishetakushin and his family had been without these luxuries, and it seemed to Bob that he had never tasted anything half so delicious as the first cup of tea he drank. His Indian friends could not understand at first his refusal of their proffered gifts of "stemmo"—tobacco—but he told them finally that it would make him sick.

and then they accepted his excuse and laughed at him good naturedly.

Manikawan had never ceased her attentions to Bob, and the others of her family seemed to have come to an understanding that it was her especial duty to look after his comfort. From the first she had been much troubled that he had only his cloth adikey instead of a deerskin coat such as her father and Mookoomahn wore, and she often expressed her regret that there was no deerskin with which to make him one. He insisted at these times that his adikey was quite warm enough, but she always shook her head in dissent, for she could not believe it, and would say,

"No, the Snow Brother is cold. Manikawan will make him warm clothes when the deer are found."

On the very night of their arrival at the camp she went amongst the wigwams and begged from the women some skins of the fall killing, tanned with the hair on, with the flesh side as fine and white and soft as chamois. In two days she had manufactured these into a coat and had it ready for decoration. It was a very handsome garment, sewn with sinew instead of thread and

having a hood attached to it similar to the hoods worn by Sishetakushin and Mookoomahn.

With brushes made from pointed sticks she painted around the bottom of the coat a foot-wide border in intricate design, introducing red, blue, brown and yellow colours that she had compounded herself the previous summer from fish roe, minerals and oil. Other decorations and ornamentations were drawn upon the front and arms of the garment before she considered it quite complete. Then she surveyed her work with commendable pride, and with a great show of satisfaction presented it and a pair of the regulation buckskin leggings to Bob. She was quite delighted when he put his new clothes on, and made no secret of her admiration of his improved appearance.

"Now," she said, "the brother is dressed as becomes him and looks very fine and brave."

"'Tis fine an' warm," Bob assented, "an' I'm thinkin' I'm lookin' like an Injun sure enough."

Bob's aversion to Manikawan's attentions was wearing off, and he was taking a new interest in her. He very often found himself looking at her and admiring her dark, pretty face and tall, supple form. Sometimes she would glance

up quickly and catch him at it, and smile, for it pleased her. Then he would feel a bit foolish and blush through the tan on his face; for he knew that she read his thoughts. But neither he nor Manikawan ever voiced the admiration that they felt for each other.

Bob was lounging in the wigwam one day a week or so after the arrival at the camp when he heard some one excitedly shouting,

"Atuk! Atuk!"

He grabbed his gun and ran outside where he met Sishetakushin rushing in from an adjoining wigwam. The Indian called to him to leave his gun behind and get a spear and follow. He could see that something of great moment had occurred and he obeyed.

The Indians from the lodges, all armed with spears, were running towards a knoll just below the camp, and Bob and Sishetakushin and Mookoomahn joined them. When they reached the top of the knoll Bob halted for a moment in astonishment. Never before had he beheld anything to compare with what he saw below. A herd of caribou containing hundreds—yes thousands—like a great living sea, was moving to the eastward.

Some of the Indians were already running ahead on their snow-shoes to turn the animals into the deep snowdrifts of a ravine, while the other attacked the herd with their spears from the side. The caribou changed their course when they saw their enemies, and plunged into the ravine, those behind crowding those in front, which sank into the drifts until they were quite helpless. From every side the Indians rushed upon the deer and the slaughter began. Bob was carried away with the excitement of the hunt, and many of the deer fell beneath his spear thrusts. The killing went on blindly, indiscriminately, without regard to the age or sex or number killed, until finally the main herd extricated itself and ran in wild panic over the river ice and out of reach of the pursuers.

In the brief interval between the discovery of the deer and the escape of the herd over four hundred animals had fallen under the ruthless spears. When Bob realized the extent of the wicked slaughter he was disgusted with himself for having taken part in it.

"'Twas wicked t' kill so many of un when we're not needin' un, an' I hopes th' Lard'll forgive me for helpin'," he said contritely

Aside from the inhumanity of the thing, it was a terrible waste of food, for it would only be possible to utilize a comparatively small proportion of the meat of the slaughtered animals. Perhaps seventy-five of the carcasses were skinned, after which the flesh was stripped from the bones and hung in thin slabs from the poles inside the wigwams to dry. The tongues were removed from all the slaughtered animals, for they are considered a great delicacy by the Indians; and some of the leg bones were taken for the marrow they contained. The great bulk of the meat, however, was left for the wolves and foxes, or to rot in the sun when summer came.

The deer killing was followed by a season of feasting, as is always the case amongst the Indians after a successful hunt. In every wigwam a kettle of stewing venison was constantly hanging night and day over the fire, and marrow bones roasting in the coals, and for several days the men did nothing but eat and smoke and drink tea.

It was, however, a busy time for the women. Besides curing the meat and tongues, they rendered marrow grease from the bones and put it up neatly in bladders for future use, and it fell

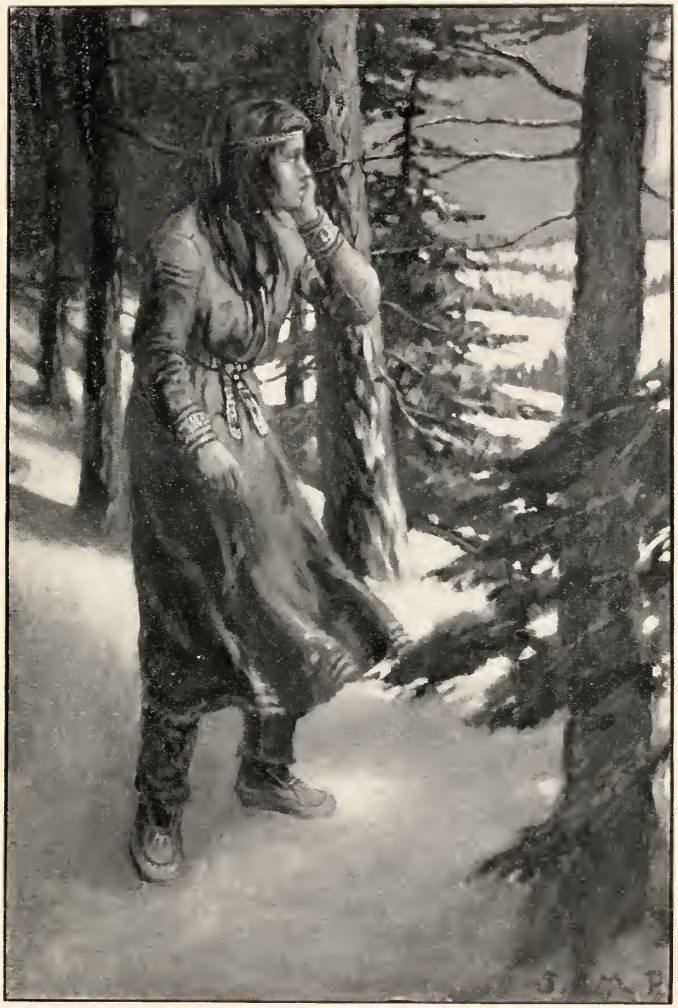
to their lot, also, to dress and tan the hides into buckskin.

The passing deer herds brought in their wake packs of big gray and black timber wolves, and the country was soon infested with these animals. At night their howls were heard, and they came boldly to the scene of the caribou slaughter and fattened upon the discarded carcasses of the animals. Now and again one was shot. With plenty to eat, they were, however, comparatively harmless, and never molested the camp.

February was drawing to a close when one day Sishetakushin, Mookoomahn and two other Indians packed their toboggans preparatory to going on an excursion. Bob noticed the preparations with interest, and inquired the meaning of them.

"The tea and tobacco are nearly gone, and we are in need of powder and ball," Sishetakushin answered.

To get these things Bob knew they must go to a trading post, and here, he decided, was a possible opportunity for him to find a means of reaching home. He asked the Indians at once for permission to accompany them. There was



"Saw her standing in the bright moonlight"

no objection to this from any of them, though they told him it would be a tiresome journey, that they would travel fast, and be back in a few days.

But Bob did not propose to let any chance of meeting white men pass him, and he hurriedly got his things together for the expedition. He had no intimation of the name or location of the post they were going to further than that the Indians told him they were going to Mr. MacPherson, who was, he felt sure, a Hudson's Bay Company Factor, and he believed that if he could once reach one of the company's forts a way would be shown him to get to Eskimo Bay. That night was one of excitement and anticipation for Bob.

Manikawan seemed to read his thoughts, for the whole evening she looked troubled, and her eyes were wet when Bob said good-bye to her in the morning. As the little party turned down upon the river ice, he looked back once and saw her standing near the wigwam, in the bright moonlight, her slender figure outlined against the snow, and he waved his hand to her.

He never knew that for many days afterwards, when the dusk of evening came, she stole alone

out of the wigwam and down the trail where he had disappeared to watch for his return, nor how lonely she was and how she brooded over his loss when she knew that she should never see her White Brother of the Snow again.

XVII

STILL FARTHER NORTH

BOB and the Indians travelled in single file, with Mookoomahn leading, and kept to the wide, smooth pathway that marked the place where the river lay imprisoned beneath ice a fathom thick. The wind had swept away the loose snow and beaten down that which remained into a hard and compact mass upon the frozen river bed, making snow-shoeing here much easier than in the spruce forest that lay behind the willow brush along the banks. The Indians walked with the long rapid stride that is peculiar to them, and which the white man finds hard to simulate, and good traveller though he was Bob had to adopt a half run to keep their pace. They drew but two lightly loaded toboggans, and unencumbered by the wigwam and other heavy camp equipment, and with no trailing squaws to hamper their speed, an even, unbroken gait was maintained as mile after mile slipped behind them.

Not a breath of air was stirring, and the abso

lute quiet that prevailed was broken only by the moving men and the rhythmic creak, creak of the snow-shoes as they came in contact with the hard packed snow.

The very atmosphere seemed frozen, so intense was the cold. The moon like a disk of burnished silver set in a steel blue sky cast a weird, metallic light over the congealed wilderness. The hoar frost that lay upon the bushes along the river bank sparkled like filmy draperies of spun silver, and transformed the bushes into an unearthly multitude of shining spirits that had gathered there from the dark, mysterious forest which lay behind them, to watch the passing strangers. Presently the light of dawn began to diffuse itself upon the world, and the spirit creations were replaced by substantial banks of frost-encrusted willows. In a little while the sun peeped timorously over the eastern hills, but, half obscured by a haze of frost flakes which hung suspended in the air, gave out no warmth to the frozen earth.

No halt was made until noon. Then a fire was built and a kettle of ice was melted and tea brewed. Bob was hungry, and the jerked venison, with its delicate nutty flavour, and the hot tea, were delicious. The latter, poured boiling from

the kettle, left a sediment of ice in the bottom of the tin cup before it was drained, so great was the cold.

After an hour's rest they hit the trail again and never relaxed their speed for a moment until sunset. Then they sought the shelter of the spruce woods behind the river bank, and in a convenient spot for a fire cleared a circular space, several feet in circumference, by shovelling the snow back with their snow-shoes, forming a high bank around their bivouac as a protection from the wind, should it rise. At one side a fire was built, and in front of the fire a thick bed of boughs spread. While the others were engaged in these preparations Bob and Sishetakushin cut a supply of wood for the night.

It was quite dark before they all settled themselves around the fire for supper. Two frying pans were now produced, and from a haunch of venison, frozen as hard as a block of wood, thin chips were cut with an axe, and with ample pieces of fat were soon sizzling in the pans and filling the air with an appetizing odour, and in spite of the bleak surroundings the place assumed a degree of comfort and hospitality.

After supper the Indians squatted around the

fire on deerskins spread upon the boughs, smoking their pipes and telling stories, while Bob reclined upon the soft robes that Manikawan had thoughtfully provided him with, watching the light play over their dark faces framed in long black hair, and thought of the Indian girl and wondered if he was always to live amongst them, and if he would ever become accustomed to their wild, rude life.

Finally they lay down close together, with their feet towards the fire, and wrapped their heads and shoulders closely in the skins, leaving their moccasined feet uncovered, to be warmed by the blaze, and the lad was soon lost in dreams of the snug cabin at Wolf Bight. Once during the night he awoke and arose to replenish the fire. The stars were looking down upon them, cold and distant, and the wilderness seemed very solemn and quiet when he resumed his place amongst the sleeping Indians.

They were on their way again by moonlight the following morning. Shortly after daybreak they turned out of the river bed and towards noon came upon some snow-shoe tracks. A little later they passed a steel trap, in which a white arctic fox struggled for freedom. They halted a mo-

ment for Sishetakushin to press his knee upon its side to kill it and then went on. The fox he left in the trap, however, for the hunter to whom it belonged. This was the first steel trap that Bob had seen since coming amongst the Indians and he drew from its presence here that they must be approaching a trading station where traps were obtainable and in use by the hunters.

In the middle of the afternoon they turned into a komatik track, and Bob's heart gave a bound of joy

"Sure we're gettin' handy t' th' coast!" he exclaimed.

They would soon find white men, he was sure. The track led them on for a mile or so, and then they heard a dog's howl and a moment later came out upon two snow igloos. Eskimo men, women, and children emerged on their hands and knees from the low, snow-tunnel entrance of the igloos at their approach, but when they saw that the travellers were a party of Indians, gave no invitation to them to enter, and said nothing until Bob called "Oksunie" to them —a word of greeting that he had learned from the Bay folk. Then they called to him "Oksunie oksunie," and began to talk amongst themselves

"They're rare wild lookin' huskies," though Bob.

As much as Bob would have liked to stop, he did not do so, for the Indians stalked past at a rapid pace, never by word or look showing that they had seen the igloos or the Eskimos.

These new people, particularly the women, who wore trousers and carried babies in large hoods hanging on their backs, did not dress like any Eskimos that Bob had ever seen before. Nor had he ever before seen the snow houses, though he had heard of them and knew what they were. The dogs, too, were large, and more like wolves in appearance than those the Bay folk used, and the komatik was narrower but much longer and heavier than those he was accustomed to. He was surely in a new and strange land.

More igloos were seen during the afternoon, but they were passed as the first had been, and at night the party bivouacked in the open as they had done the night before.

On the morning of the third day they passed into a stretch of barren, treeless, rolling country, and before midday turned upon a well-beaten komatik trail, which they followed for a couple of miles, when it swung sharply to the left towards

the river, and as they turned around a ledge of rocks at the top of a low ridge a view met Bob that made him shout with joy, and hasten his pace.

At his feet, in the field of snow, lay a post of the Hudson's Bay Company.

XVIII

A MISSION OF TRUST

AS Bob looked down upon the white washed buildings of the Post, his sensation was very much like that of a shipwrecked sailor who has for a long time been drifting hopelessly about upon a trackless sea in a rudderless boat, and suddenly finds himself safe in harbour. The lad had never seen anything in his whole life that looked so comfortable as that little cluster of log buildings with the smoke curling from the chimney tops, and the general air of civilization that surrounded them. He did not know where he was, nor how far from home; but he did know that this was the habitation of white men, and the cloud of utter helplessness that had hung over him for so long was suddenly swept away and his sky was clear and bright again.

A man clad in a white adikey and white moleskin trousers emerged from one of the buildings, paused for a moment to gaze at Bob and his

companions as they approached, and then re-entered the building.

As they descended the hill the Indians turned to an isolated cabin which stood somewhat apart from the main group of buildings and to the eastward of them, but Bob ran down to the one into which the man had disappeared. His heart was all aflutter with excitement and expectancy. As he approached the door, it suddenly opened, and there appeared before him a tall, middle-aged man with full, sandy beard and a kindly face. Bob felt intuitively that this was the factor of the Post, and he said very respectfully,

"Good day, sir."

"Good day, good day," said the man. "I thought at first you were an Indian. Come in."

Bob entered and found himself in the trader's office. At one side were two tables that served as desks, and on a shelf against the wall behind them rested a row of musty ledgers and account books. Benches in lieu of chairs surrounded a large stove in the centre.

"Take off your skin coat and sit down," invited the trader, who was, indeed, Mr. Mac Pherson of whom the Indians had told.

"Thank you, sir," said Bob.

When he was finally seated Mr. McPherson asked:

"That was Sishetakushin's crowd you came with, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir," Bob answered.

"Where did you hail from? It's something new to see a white man come out of the bush with the Indians."

"From Eskimo Bay, sir, an' what place may this be?"

"Eskimo Bay! Eskimo Bay! Why, this is Ungava! How in the world did you ever get across the country? What's your name?"

"My name's Bob Gray, sir, an' I lives at Wolf Bight." Then Bob went on, prompted now and again by the factor's questions, to tell the story of his adventures.

"Well," said Mr. MacPherson, "you've had a wonderful escape from freezing and death and a remarkable experience. You'd better go over to the men's house and they'll put you up there. Come back after you've had dinner and we'll talk your case over. The dinner bell is ringing now," he added, as the big bell began to clang. "Perhaps I'd better go over with you and show you the way."

The men's house, as the servants' quarters were called, was a one-story log house but a few steps from the office. As Bob and Mr. MacPherson entered it, a big man with a bushy red beard, and a tall brawny man with chean shaven face, both perhaps twenty-five or thirty years of age, and both with "Scot" written all over their countenances, were in the act of sitting down to an uncovered table, while an ugly old Indian hag was dishing up a savory stew of ptarmigan.

Bob's eye took in a plate heaped high with white bread in the centre of the table and he mentally resolved that it should not be there when he had finished dinner.

"Here's some company for you," announced the factor. "Ungava Bob just ran over from Eskimo Bay to pay us a visit. Take care of him. This," continued he by way of introduction, indicating the red-headed man, "is Eric the Red, our carpenter, and this," turning to the other, "is the Duke of Wellington, our blacksmith. Fill up, Ungava Bob, and come over to the office and have a talk when you've finished dinner."

"Sit doon, sit doon," said the red-whiskered man, adding, as Mr. MacPherson closed the door

behind him, "my true name's Sandy Craig ano th' blacksmith here is Jamie Lunan. Th' boss ha' a way o' namin' every mon t' suit hisself. Now, what's your true name, lad? 'Tis not Ungava Bob."

"Bob Gray, an' I comes from Wolf Bight."

"Now, where can Wolf Bight be?" asked Sandy.

"In Eskimo Bay, sir."

"Aye, aye, Eskimo Bay. 'Tis a lang way ye are from Eskimo Bay! Th' ship folk tell o' Eskimo Bay a many hundred miles t' th' suthard. An' Jamie an' me be a lang way fra' Petherhead. Be helpin' yesel' now, lad. Ha' some partridge an' ye maun be starvin' for bread, eatin' only th' grub o' th' heathen Injuns this lang while," said he, passing the plate, and adding in apology. "'Tis na' such bread as we ha' in auld Scotland. Injun women canna make bread wi' th' Scotch lassies an' we ne'er ha' a bit o' oatmeal or oatcake. 'Tis bread, though. An' how could ye live wi' th' Injuns? 'Tis bad enough t' bide here wi' na' neighbours but th' greasy huskies an' durty Injuns comin' now an' again, but we has some civilized grub t' eat—sugar an' molasses an' butter, such as 'tis."

Sandy and Jamie plied Bob with all sorts of questions about Eskimo Bay and his life with the Indians, and they did not fail to tell him a good deal about Peterhead, their Scotland home, and both bewailed loudly the foolish desire for adventure that had induced them to leave it to be exiled in Ungava amongst the heathen Eskimos and Indians in a land where "nine minths o' th' year be winter an' th' ither three remainin' minths infested wi' th' worst plagues o' Egypt, referrin' t' th' flies an' nippers (mosquitoes)."

Strange and new it all was, and while he ate and talked, Bob took in his surroundings. The room was not unlike the Post kitchen at Eskimo Bay, though not so spotlessly clean. Besides the table there were two benches, four rough, home-made chairs and a big box stove that crackled cheerily. At one side three bunks were built against the wall and were spread with heavy woollen blankets. Two chests stood near the bunks and several guns rested upon pegs against the wall. Upon ropes stretched above the stove numerous duffel socks and mittens hung to dry. The Indian woman passed in and out through a passageway that led from the side of the room opposite the door at which he had

entered and her kitchen was evidently on the other side of the passageway.

Bob did not forget his resolution as to the bread, to which was added the luxury of butter, and more than once the Indian woman had to replenish the plate. When they arose from the table Jamie pointed out to Bob the bunk that he was to occupy. Then, while they smoked their pipes, they gossiped about the Post doings until the bell warned them that it was time to return to their work.

In accordance with Mr. MacPherson's instructions Bob walked over to the factor's office where he found a young man of eighteen or nineteen years of age writing at one of the desks.

"Sit down," said he, looking up. "Mr. MacPherson will be in shortly. You're the young fellow just arrived, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," said Bob.

"You've had a long journey, I hear, and must be glad to get out. When did you leave home?"

"In September, sir, when I goes t' my trail."

"I came here on the *Eric* in September, and if you want to see home as badly as I do you're

pretty anxious to get back there. But there isn't any chance of getting away from here till the ship comes. This is the last place God ever made and the loneliest. What did you say your name is?"

"Bob Gray, sir."

"Well, Mr. MacPherson will call you something else, but don't mind that. He has a new name for every one. He calls Sishetakushin, one of the Indians you came in with, Abraham Lincoln because he's so tall, and one of the stout Eskimos is Grover Cleveland. That's the name of an American president. Mr. MacPherson gets the papers every year and keeps posted. He received, on the ship, all last year's issues of a New York paper called the *Sun* besides a great packet of Scotch and English papers. But this *Sun* he thinks more of than any of them and every morning he picks out the paper for that date the year before and reads it as though it had just been delivered. One year behind, but just as fresh here. He finds a lot of new names in 'em to give the Eskimos and Indians and the rest of us that way. I'm Secretary Bayard, whoever he may be. I don't read the American papers much. The chief clerk is Lord Salisbury

the new premier. You know the Conservatives downed the Liberals, and Gladstone is out. Good enough for him, too, for meddling in the Irish question. I'm a conservative, or I would be if I was home. We don't have a chance to be anything here. Now, I suppose you ——"

Here Mr. MacPherson entered and the loquacious Secretary Bayard became suddenly engrossed in his work. The factor opened a door leading into a small room to the right.

"Come in here, Ungava Bob," said he, "and we'll have a talk. Now," he continued when they were seated, "what do you think you'll do?"

"I don't know, sir. I wants t' get home wonderful bad," said Bob.

"Yes, yes, I suppose you do. But you're a long way from home. It looks as though you'll have to stay here till the ship comes next summer. I can send you back with it."

"'Tis a long while t' be bidin' here, sir, an' I'm fearin' as mother'll be worryin'."

"There's no way out of it that I can see, though. I'll give you work to do to pay for your keep, and I'm afraid that's the best we can do Unless," continued the factor, thoughtfully

"unless you go with the mail. I find I've got to send some letters to Fort Pelican. How far is that from Eskimo Bay,—a hundred miles?"

"Ninety, sir."

"Do you speak Eskimo?"

"No, sir."

"Well, the dog drivers will be Eskimos The men that leave here will go east to the coast. They will meet other Eskimos there who will go to Pelican. It's a hard and dangerous journey. Are you a good traveller?"

"Not so bad, sir, an' I drives dogs."

Mr. MacPherson was silent for a few moments then he spoke.

"These Eskimos are careless scallawags with letters and they lose them sometimes. The letters I am sending are very important ones or I wouldn't be sending them. I think you would take better care of them than they. Will you keep them safe if I let you go with the Eskimos?"

"Yes, sir, I'd be rare careful."

"Well, we'll see. I think I'll let you take the letters. I can't say yet just when I'll have you start but within the month."

"Thank you, sir."

"In the meantime make yourself useful about the place here. There'll be nothing for you to do to-day. Look around and get acquainted. You may go now. Come to the office in the morning and one of the clerks will tell you what to do."

"All right, sir."

When Bob passed out of doors he was fairly treading upon air. A way was opening up for him to return home and in all probability he should reach there by the time Dick and Ed and Bill came out from the trails in the spring and if they had not, in the meantime, taken the news of his disappearance to Wolf Bight, the folks at home would know nothing of it until he told them himself and would have no unusual cause for worry in the meantime. He felt a considerable sense of importance, too, at the confidence Mr. MacPherson reposed in him in suggesting that he might place him in charge of an important mail. And what a tale he would have to tell! Bessie would think him quite a hero. After all it had turned out well. He had caught a silver fox and all the other fur—quite enough, he was sure, to send Emily to the hospital. God had been very good to him and he cast his eyes to

heaven and breathed a little prayer of thanksgiving.

Sishetakushin and Mookoomahn had been quite forgotten by Bob in the excitement of the arrival at the Fort. Now he saw them and the two other Indians coming over from the cabin to which they had gone when he left them to meet Mr. MacPherson, and he hurried down to meet them and tell them that he had found a way to reach home. It was plain that they did not approve of the turn matters had taken, for they only grunted and said nothing.

They turned to a building where the door stood open and Bob accompanied them and entered with them. This was the Post shop, and a young man, whom Bob had not seen before, presumably "Lord Salisbury," the chief clerk of whom the talkative "Secretary Bayard" had spoken, was behind the counter attending to the wants of an Eskimo and his wife, the latter with a black-eyed, round-faced baby which sat contentedly in her hood sucking a stick of black tobacco. The clerk spoke to the Indians in their language, said "good day" to Bob in English, and then continued his dickering in the Eskimo language with his customers, who had deposited

before them on the counter a number of arctic fox pelts.

When the clerk had finished with the Eskimos he turned to the Indians in a very businesslike way and asked to see the furs they had brought. They produced some marten skins which, after a great deal of wrangling, were bartered for tobacco, tea, powder, shot, bullets, gun caps, beads, three-cornered needles and a few trinkets. Much time was consumed in this, for the Indians insisted upon handling and discussing at length each individual article purchased.

Bob had brought with him the marten skins that he had trapped during his stay with the Indians and he exchanged them for a red shawl and a little box of beads for Manikawan, a trinket for the old woman, Manikawan's mother, and a small gift each for Sishetakushin and Mookoomahn, besides some much needed clothing for himself.

These tokens of his gratitude he presented to the two Indians, who had indicated their intention of returning to the interior camp the next morning. They had not fully realized until now that Bob was actually going to leave them and attempt to reach home with the Eskimos, and

they protested vigorously against the plan. Sishetakushin told him the Eskimos were bad people and would never guide him safely to his friends. Indeed, he asserted, they might kill him when they had him alone with them. On the other hand, the Indians were kind and true. They had recognized his worth and had adopted him into the tribe. With them he had been happy and with them he would be safe. He could have his own wigwam and take Manikawan for his wife; and sometimes, if he wished, he could go to visit his people.

The failure of their arguments to impress Bob was a great disappointment to the Indians, and Bob, on his part, felt a keen sense of sorrow when, the following morning, he saw his benefactors go. They had saved his life and had done all they could in their rude, primitive way for his comfort, and he appreciated their kindness and hospitality.

Ungava Bob, as every one at the Post called him, made himself generally useful about the fort and was soon quite at home in his new surroundings. He cut wood and helped the Eskimo servants feed the dogs, and did any jobs that presented themselves and soon became a general

favourite, not only with Mr. MacPherson but with the clerks and servants also.

His quarters with Sandy and Jamie seemed luxurious in contrast with the rough life of the interior to which he had so long been accustomed, and when the three gathered around the red hot stove those cold evenings after the day's work was done and supper eaten, the Scotchmen held him enthralled with stories they told of their native land and the wonderful and magnificent things they had seen there.

Besides the factor and the two clerks these were the only white people at the Fort, and naturally they grew to be close companions. The white men, too, were the only ones of the Post folk that could speak English, for the few Eskimos and Indians that lived on the reservation knew only their respective native tongue.

And so the time passed until, at last, the middle of March came, with its lengthening days and stormy weather, and Bob was beginning to fear that Mr. MacPherson had abandoned the project of sending him out with a mail, for nothing further had been said about his going since the conversation on the day of his arrival. For two or three days he had been upon the lookout

for a favourable opportunity to ask whether or not he was to go, and was thinking about it one Friday morning as he worked at the wood-pile, when "Secretary Bayard" hailed him:

"Hey, there, Bob! The boss wants you."

This was auspicious, and Bob hurried over to the factor's inner office, where he found Mr. MacPherson waiting for him.

"Well, Ungava Bob," the factor greeted, "are you getting tired of Ungava and anxious to get away?"

"I'm likin' un fine, sir, but wantin' t' be goin' home wonderful bad," answered Bob.

"I suppose you are. I suppose you are. I remember when I was young and first left home, how badly I wanted to go back," he said, reminiscently. "That was a long while ago and there's no one for me to go home to now—they're all dead—all dead—and it's too late."

He was silent for a little in meditation, and seemed to have quite forgotten Bob. Then suddenly bringing himself from the past to the present again, he continued:

"Yes, yes, you want to go home, and I'm going to start you on Monday morning. I'll give you a packet of very important letters that you

will deliver to Mr. Forbes, the factor at Fort Pelican, and I shall hold you responsible for their safe delivery. Akonuk and Matuk will go with you as far as Kangeva, where they will try to get two other Eskimos with a good team of dogs to take you on to Rigolet. But it may be they'll have to go farther, to find drivers that know the way, and that will delay you some. You'll have time to reach Rigolet, however, before the break-up if you push on. The Eskimos will lose some time visiting with their friends when they meet them on the way, and I've allowed for that. Now, be ready to start on Monday. The clerks will fix you up with what supplies you will need for the journey."

"Yes, sir. I'll be ready, an' thank you, sir."

"Hold on," said the factor as Bob turned to go. "Here's a rifle that I'm going to let you take with you, for you may need it." He picked up a gun that had been leaning against the wall beside him. "It's a 44 repeating Winchester that I've used for three or four years, and it's a good one. I've got a heavier one now for seals and white whales, and I'll give you this if you take the letters through safely. Is that a bargain?"

Bob's eyes bulged and his pleasure was manifest

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. I'll not be losin' th' letters."

It was the first repeating rifle—the first rifle, in fact, of any kind—that he had ever seen, and as Mr. MacPherson explained and illustrated to him its manipulation, he thought it the most marvellous piece of mechanism in the world.

"Now be careful how you handle it," cautioned the factor after the arm had been thoroughly described. "You see that when you throw a cartridge into the barrel by the lever action it cocks the gun, and if you're not going to discharge it again immediately you must let the hammer down. It shoots a good many times farther, too, than your old gun, so be sure there are no Eskimos within half a mile of its muzzle or you'll be killing some of them, and I don't want that to happen, for I need them all to hunt. Besides, if you killed one of them his friends would be putting you out of the way so you'd kill no more, and then my packet of letters wouldn't be delivered. Now look out."

"I'll be rare careful of un, sir."

"Very well, see that you are. Be ready to start, now, at daylight, Monday."

"I'll be ready, sir."

Bob's delight was little short of ecstatic as he strode out of the office with his rifle.

The next day (Saturday) "Secretary Bayard," with voluminous comments and cautions in reference to the undertaking, the Eskimos and things in general, helped him and the two Eskimos that were to accompany him put in readiness his supplies, which consisted of hardtack, jerked venison, fat pork—the only provisions they had which would not freeze—tea, two kettles, sulphur matches, ammunition, and a reindeer skin sleeping bag. The Eskimos possessed sleeping bags of their own. Blubber and white whale meat, frozen very hard, were packed for dog food.

An axe, a small jack plane and two snow knives were the only tools to be carried. This knife had a blade about two feet in length and resembled a small, broad-bladed sword. It was to be used in the construction of snow igloos. The jack plane was needed to keep the komatik runners smooth.

Instead of the runners being shod with whalebone, as in many places in the North, the Es-

kimos of Ungava apply a turf—which is stored for the purpose in the short summer season—and mixed with water to the consistency of mud. This is moulded on the runners with the hands in a thick, broad, semicircular shape, and freezes as hard as glass. Then its irregularities are planed smooth, and it slips easily over the snow and ice.

Finally, all the preparations were completed, and Bob looked forward in a high state of excited anticipation to the great journey of new experiences and adventures that lay before him to be crowned by the joy of his home-coming.

But a thousand miles separated Bob from his home and danger and death lurked by the way. Human plans and day-dreams are not considered by the Providence that moulds man's fortune, and it is a blessed thing that human eyes cannot look into the future.

XIX

AT THE MERCY OF THE WIND

IN the starlight of Monday morning Akonuk and Matuk harnessed their twelve big dogs. Fierce creatures these animals were, scarcely less wild than the wolves that prowled over the hills behind the Fort, of which they were the counterpart, and more than once the Eskimos had to beat them with the butt end of a whip to stop their fighting and bring them to submission.

The load had already been lashed upon the komatik and the mud on the runners rubbed over with lukewarm water which had frozen into a thin glaze of ice that would slip easily over the snow.

Mr. MacPherson gave Bob the package of letters, with a final injunction not to lose them when at length the dogs were harnessed and all was ready. Good-byes were said and Bob and his two Eskimo companions were off.

The snow was packed hard and firm, so that neither the dogs nor the komatik broke through,

and the animals, fresh and eager, started at a fast pace and maintained an even, steady trot throughout the day.

Occasionally there were hills to climb, and some of these were so steep that it was necessary for Bob and the Eskimos to haul upon the traces with the dogs, and now and then they had to lift the komatik over rocky places, and on one river that they crossed they were forced to cut in several places a passage around ice hills, where the tide had piled the ice blocks thirty or forty feet high. But for the most part the route lay over a rolling country near the coast.

Only at long intervals were trees to be seen, and these were very small and stunted, and grew in sheltered hollows. At noon they halted in one of these hollows to build a fire, over which they melted snow in one of the kettles and made tea, with which they washed down some hard-tack and jerked venison.

That night when they stopped to make their camp, sixty miles lay behind them. The going had been good and they had done a splendid day's work.

Before unharnessing the dogs, which would have immediately attacked and destroyed the

goods upon the sledge had they been released, the Eskimos went about building an igloo.

A good bank of snow was selected and out of this Akonuk cut blocks as large as he could lift and placed them on edge in a circle about seven feet in diameter in the interior. As each block was placed it was trimmed and fitted closely to its neighbour. Then while Matuk cut more blocks and handed them to Akonuk as they were needed, the latter standing in the centre of the structure placed them upon edge upon the other blocks, building them up in spiral form, and narrowing in each upper round until the igloo assumed the form of a dome. When it was nearly as high as his head, the upper tier of blocks was so close together that a single large block was sufficient to close the aperture at the top. This block was like the keystone in an arch, and held the others firmly in place. Akonuk now cut a round hole through the side of the igloo close to the bottom, and large enough for him to crawl through on his hands and knees.

When the Eskimos began building the snow house Bob commenced unloading the komatik, but Matuk called "Chuly, chuly,"—wait a

little—to him, and said "tamaany,"—here—a suggestion that he would be more useful in helping to chink up the crevices between the blocks of snow on the igloo after Akonuk placed them This he did, and in half an hour from the time they halted the igloo was completed and was so strongly built a man could have stood on its top without fear of breaking it down.

The tops of spruce boughs were now cut and spread within, after which they unlashed the komatik, and, covering the bed of boughs with deerskins, stored everything that the dogs would be likely to destroy safely inside the igloo. This done the dogs were unharnessed and fed, the men standing over the animals with stout sticks to prevent their fighting while they ravenously gulped down the chunks of frozen whale meat.

This function completed, a fire was made out side the igloo and tea brewed. With the kettle of hot tea the three crawled into the igloo, dragging after them a block of snow which Akonuk fitted neatly into the entrance and chinked the edges with loose snow.

Matuk now brought forth an Eskimo lamp into which he squeezed the oil from a piece of seal

blubber, first pounding the blubber with the axe head, and with moss to serve the purpose of a wick, the lamp was lighted. This lamp, which was made of stone cut in the shape of a half moon, was about ten inches long, four inches wide and an inch deep. The moss that served as a wick was arranged along the straight side and gave out a strong, fishy odour as it burned.

Besides the tea, hardtack and jerked venison, Bob ate pieces of the frozen fat pork which had been boiled before starting, and found it very delicious, as fat always is to a traveller in the far North. The Eskimos each accepted a small piece of it from him, but when he offered them a second portion they both said "Taemet,"—Thank you, enough—and instead helped themselves liberally to raw seal blubber, which they ate with an evident relish and gusto along with the jerked venison and hardtack.

Akonuk, the older of these men, was perhaps thirty-five years of age, nearly six feet in height and well proportioned. Matuk was not so tall, but like Akonuk was well formed. Both were muscular and powerful men physically, and both had round, fat faces that were full of good nature.

Intense as was the cold out of doors, the stone lamp soon made the igloo so warm within that all were compelled to remove their outer skin garments. The snow, however, was not melted, but remained quite hard and firm.

The Eskimos talked and smoked for a whole hour after supper, before stretching in their sleeping bags, but Bob crawled into his almost immediately, for he was very weary after his long day's travel. His knowledge of their language was not sufficient for him to take part in the conversation, or, indeed, to understand much they said, and the constant talk soon became tiresome to him, though he kept his ears open with a view to adding to his Eskimo vocabulary whenever an opportunity offered.

"'Tis a strange language an' I'm wonderin' how they understands un," he observed as he turned over to go to sleep.

Very early the next morning he heard Akonuk calling to Matuk to wake up. Then for a little while the two Eskimos conversed together and finally the lamp was lighted. Over this a snow knife was stuck into the side of the igloo and the kettle hung upon the knife in such a position that it was directly over the flame, and snow, cut

from the side of the igloo near the bottom, was melted for tea, and thus the simple breakfast was prepared without going out of doors.

When Bob came out of his bag to eat he realized that a storm was raging outside, for he could hear the wind roaring around the igloo, and Akonuk made him understand that a heavy snow-storm was in progress and a continuation of the journey that day quite out of the question. When daylight finally filtered dimly through the igloo roof, he removed the snow block that closed the entrance, and crawled to the outer world, where he verified Akonuk's statement.

The air was so filled with snow that it would be quite useless to attempt to move in it. The previous night the dogs had dug holes for themselves in the bank and were now completely covered with the drift, and invisible, and the komatik, too, was quite hidden. The aspect was dreary in the extreme, and he returned to spend the day dozing in his sleeping bag.

For two days they were held prisoners by the storm, and when finally the third morning dawned clear and cold, a deep covering of soft snow had spoiled the good going and they found travelling

much slower and more difficult than the day they started.

Akonuk and Bob ran ahead on their snow-shoes to break the way for the dogs, which Matuk drove, and found it necessary to constantly urge the animals on with shouts of "Oo-isht! Oo-isht! Ok-suit! Ok-suit!" and sometimes with stinging cuts of his long whip. This whip was made of braided strands of walrus hide, and tapered from a thickness of two inches at the butt to one long single strand at the tip. Its handle was a piece of wood about a foot long and the whole whip was perhaps thirty-five feet in length. When not in use a loop on the handle was dropped over the end of one of the forward crosspieces of the komatik, and its lash trailed behind in the snow. Here it could be readily reached and brought into instant service. Matuk was an expert in the manipulation of this cruel instrument, and the dogs were in deadly fear of it. When he cracked it over their heads they would plunge madly forward and whine piteously for mercy. When he wished to punish a dog he could cut it with the lash tip even to the extent of breaking the skin, if he desired, and he never missed the animal he aimed at.

Each dog had an individual trace which was fastened to a long, single thong of sealskin attached to the front of the komatik. These traces were of varying length, the leader, or dog trained to the Eskimos' calls, having the longest trace, which permitted it to go well in advance of the others.

For several days the journey was monotonous and uneventful. Gradually as they advanced the travelling improved again, as the March winds drifted away the soft, loose snow and left the bottom solid and firm for the dogs.

Ptarmigans were plentiful, as were also arctic hares, and a white fox and one or two white owls were killed. The flesh of all these they ate, and were thus enabled to keep in reserve the provisions they had brought with them. Bob was rather disgusted than amused to see the Eskimos eat the flesh of animals and birds raw. They appeared to esteem as a particular delicacy the freshly killed ptarmigans, still warm with the life blood, eating even the entrails uncooked.

One afternoon they turned the komatik from the land to the far stretching ice of a wide bay directing their course towards a cove on the far

ther side, where the Eskimos said they expected to find igloos.

All day a stiff wind had been blowing from the southwest and as the day grew old it increased in velocity. The komatik was taking an almost easterly course and therefore the wind did not seriously hamper their progress, though it was bitter cold and searching and made travelling extremely uncomfortable.

Less than half-way across the bay, which was some twelve miles wide, a crack in the ice was passed over. Presently cracks became numerous, and glancing behind him Bob noticed a wide black space along the shore at the point where they had taken to the ice, and could see in the distance farther to the northwest, as it reflected the light, a white streak of foam where the angry sea was assailing the ice barrier. He realized at once that the wind and sea were smashing the ice.

They were far from land and in grave peril. The Eskimos urged the dogs to renewed efforts, and the poor brutes themselves, seeming to realize the danger, pulled desperately at the traces.

After a time the ice beneath them began to

undulate, moving up and down in waves and giving an uncertain footing. Between them and the cove they were heading for, but a little outside of their course, was a bare, rocky island and the Eskimos suddenly turned the dogs towards it. The whole body of ice was now separated from the mainland and this island was the only visible refuge open to them. Behind them the sea was booming and thundering in a terrifying manner as it drove gigantic ice blocks like mighty battering rams against the main mass, which crumbled steadily away before the onslaught.

It had become a race for life now, and it was a question whether the sea or the men would win. Once a crack was reached that they could not cross and they had to make a considerable detour to find a passage around it, and it looked for a little while as though this sealed their fate, but with a desperate effort they presently found themselves within a few yards of the island.

Here a new danger awaited them. The ice upon the shore was rising and falling and crumbling against the rocks with each incoming and receding sea. To successfully land it would be necessary to make a dash at the very instant

that the ice came in contact with the shore. A moment too soon or a moment too late and they would inevitably be crushed to death. It was their only way of escape, however. The howling dogs were held in leash until the proper moment, and all prepared for the run.

Akonuk gave the word. The dogs leaped forward, the men jumped, and they found themselves ashore. The three grabbed the traces and helped the dogs jerk the komatik clear of the next sea, and all were at last safe.

Five minutes later a landing would have been impossible, and two hours later the entire bay surrounding their island was swept clear of ice by the gale and outgoing tide.

During the whole adventure the Eskimos had conducted themselves with the utmost coolness and gave Bob confidence and courage. Dangers of this kind had no terrors for them for they had met them all their lives.

They had landed upon the windward side of the island at a point where they were exposed to the full sweep of the gale.

"Peungeatuk"—very bad—said Akonuk.

Then he told Bob to remain by the dogs while he and Matuk looked for a sheltered camp

ing place. In half an hour Matuk returned, his face wreathed in smiles, with the information,

"Innuit, igloo."

Then he and Bob drove the dogs to the lee side of the island, where they found four large snow igloos and several men, women and children, standing outside waiting to see the white traveller.

The Eskimos received Bob kindly, and they asked him inside while some of the men helped Akonuk and Matuk erect an igloo and fix up their camp.

The several igloos were all connected by snow tunnels, which permitted of an easy passage from one to the other without the necessity of going out of doors. A piece of clear ice, like glass, was set into the roof of each to answer for a window. They were all filled with a stench so sickening that Bob soon made an excuse to go outside and lend a hand in unpacking and helping Akonuk and Matuk make their own snow house ready.

There were no boughs here for a bed, as the island sustained no growth whatever, and in place of the boughs the dog harness was spread about before the deerskins were put down. In a

little while the place was made quite comfortable.

It was not until they sat down to supper that Bob realized fully the serious position they were in. Akonuk and Matuk, after much difficulty, for he could understand their Eskimo tongue so imperfectly, explained to him that there was no means of reaching the mainland as there were no boats on the island, and that after the food they had was eaten there would be no means of procuring more, as the island had no game upon it. They also told him that no one would be passing the island until summer and that there was therefore no hope of outside rescue.

But one chance of escape was possible. If the wind were to shift to the northward and hold there long enough it would probably drive the ice back into the bay and then it would quickly freeze and they could reach the mainland. This their only hope, at this season of the year, for March was nearly spent, was a scant one

XX

PRISONERS OF THE SEA

THE party of Eskimos that Bob and his companions found encamped upon the island had come from the Kangeva mainland to spear seals through the animals' breathing holes in the ice, which in this part of the bay were more numerous than on the main land side. In the few days since they had established themselves here they had met with some success, and had accumulated a sufficient store of meat and blubber to keep them and their dogs for a month or so, but further seal hunting, or hunting of any kind, was now out of the question, as no animal life existed on the island itself, and without boats with which to go upon the water the people were quite helpless in this respect.

Limited as was their supply of provisions, however, they unselfishly offered to share with Bob and his two companions the little they had, as is the custom with people who have not learned the harder ways of civilization and there-

fore live pretty closely to the Golden Rule. This hospitality was a considerable strain upon their resources, for the twelve dogs in addition to their own would require no small amount of flesh and fat to keep them even half-way fed; and the whale meat that had been brought for the dogs from Ungava Post was nearly all gone.

Akonuk had been instructed by Mr. MacPherson to discover the whereabouts of these very Eskimos and arrange with two of them to go on with Bob, after which he and Matuk were to secure from them food for themselves and their team and return to Ungava.

A good part of the hardtack, boiled pork and venison still remained, for, as we have seen, the game they had killed on the way had pretty nearly been enough for their wants. It was fortunate for Bob that they had these provisions, which required no cooking, for otherwise he would have had to eat the raw seal as the Eskimos did. They understood his aversion to doing this, and generously, and at the same time preferably, perhaps, ate the uncooked meat themselves, and left the other for him.

March passed into April, and daily the situation grew more desperate, as the provisions di-

minished with each sunset. Bob was worried It began to look as though he and the Eskimos were doomed to perish on this miserable island He was sorry now that he had not waited at Ungava for the ship, and been more patient, for then he would have reached Eskimo Bay in safety. At first the Eskimos were very cheerful and apparently quite unconcerned, and this consoled him somewhat and made him more confident; but finally even they were showing signs of restlessness.

Every day he was becoming more familiar with their language and could understand more and more of their conversation, and he drew from it and their actions that they considered the situation most critical. Back of the igloos was a hill a couple of hundred feet high, and many times each day the men of the camp would climb it and look long and earnestly to the north, where the heaving billows of Hudson Straits and the sky line met, broken only here and there by huge icebergs that towered like great crystal mountains above the water. They were watching for the ice field that they hoped would drift down with each tide to bridge the sea that separated them from the distant mainland.

The early April days were growing long and the sun's rays shining more directly upon the world were gaining power, though not yet enough to bring the temperature up to zero even at high noon, but enough to remind the men that winter was aging, and the ice hourly less likely to come back.

One of the Eskimos, Tuavituk by name, was an Angakok, or conjurer, and claimed to possess special powers which permitted him to communicate with Torngak, the Great Spirit who ruled their fortunes just as the Manitou rules the fortunes of the Indians. Tuavituk one day announced to the assembled Eskimos that something had been done to displease Torngak, and to punish them he had caused the storm to come that had so suddenly carried away the ice and left them marooned upon this desolate island, and here they would all perish eventually of starvation unless Torngak were appeased.

This announcement occasioned a long discussion as to what the cause of their trouble could have been. One old Eskimo suggested that the ice had broken up at the very moment that the Kablunok—stranger—arrived, and that his presence was undoubtedly the disturbing influence

White men, he said, showed no respect for Torngak, and it was quite reasonable, therefore that Torngak should resent it and wish not only to destroy the white men, but punish the innuit who gave the kablunok shelter or assistance. If this were the case they could only hope for relief after first driving Bob from their camp. When once purged of his presence Torngak would be satisfied, he would send the ice back into the bay and they would be enabled to return to the mainland and to renew their hunting.

A long discussion followed this harangue in which all the men took part with the exception of Tuavituk, who as Angakok reserved his opinion until it should be called for in a professional way; and all agreed with the first speaker save Akonuk and Matuk, who, being visitors, spoke last.

Akonuk asserted that he and Matuk had travelled with the kablunok all the way from Ungava and had enjoyed during that time not only perfect safety and comfort, but had made an unusually quick and lucky journey, killing all the ptarmigans and small game they wanted, and experiencing with the exception of one snow

storm excellent weather until they approached Kangeva. Then the ill wind blew upon them and brought disaster as they came to the camp on the island; therefore it seemed quite certain that not the kablunok but some of the innuit in the camp had offended the great Torngak, and amongst themselves they must look for the cause of their misfortune.

Matuk followed this speech with an address in which he bore out Akonuk's statements, and, doubtless having in mind Bob's plentiful supply of tea, of which beverage Matuk was passionately fond and partook freely, he stated it as his opinion that the presence of the kablunok had actually been the source of the good luck they had had previous to their arrival at Kangeva. Then he wound up with the startling announcement that he believed he knew the cause of Torngak's anger: that on the very day of their arrival he had seen Chealuk—one of the old women—sewing a netsek—sealskin adikey—*with the sinew of the tukto*—reindeer.

Every one turned to Chealuk for confirmation and she said simply,

"It is true."

The Eskimos were struck dumb with horror

This, then, was the cause of their trouble. For the women to work with any part of the reindeer while the men were hunting seals was one of the greatest affronts that could be offered the Great Spirit. Torngak had been insulted and angered. He must be appeased and mollified at any cost.

Tuavituk, the Angakok, it was decided, must do some conjuring. He must get into immediate communication with Torngak and learn the spirit's wishes and demands and what must be done to dispel the evil charm that Chealuk had worked by her thoughtlessness. Tauvituk was quite willing—indeed anxious—to do this, but he demanded to be well paid for it, and every man had to contribute some valuable pelt or article of clothing.

When all preparations for the seance had been made the Angakok's head was covered and in a few moments he began to utter untelligible exclamations, which were shortly punctuated by shouts and screams and ravings. He fell to the floor and seemed stricken with a fit. and Bob thought the man had gone stark mad. He struck out and grasped those within his reach, and they were glad to escape from his iron clutch

For several minutes this wild frenzy lasted before he said an intelligible word.

"The deer! The deer! The deer's sinew! Chealuk! Chealuk! Chealuk! Torngak! The evil spirit is in Chealuk! She must go! Must go! Send Chealuk away! Send her away! Send her away! Send her away!"

Finally from sheer exhaustion he quieted down and came out of his trance. He probably thought that he had given them their value's worth and what they had wanted, and that they should be satisfied.

It was now decreed that, this being the direct command of Torngak, Chealuk must be expelled from the camp. Some even asserted that she should be killed, but the majority decided that as Torngak had said merely that "Chealuk must go" that meant only that she must be sent away. If this did not prove sufficient to counteract their ill luck, why she could, after a reasonable time, be sought out and dispatched, if she had not in the meantime perished.

The feeble old woman heard it all with outward stoic indifference. It was a part of her religion and she probably thought the punishment quite just, and whatever shrinking of spirit she

felt, she hid it heroically from the others. To have been killed immediately would have been more humane than banishment, for the latter only meant a slower but just as sure a death, from exposure and starvation.

To Bob, who had listened intently and was able to grasp the situation in a general way, it seemed heartless in the extreme; but his protests would not only have been powerless to move the Eskimos from their purpose, but in all probability would have worked harm for himself and to no avail. These people that at first had seemed so amiable and hospitable, and almost childlike in their nature, had been by their heathen superstitions suddenly transformed into cruel, unsympathetic savages.

"Oh," thought Bob, "if I had but heeded Sishetakushin's warning!"

But it was too late now to repent of the course he had taken and he had only to abide by it. It seemed to him that his own life hung by a mere thread and that at any moment some fancy might strike them to sacrifice him too. He had indeed but barely escaped Chealuk's fate, and the next time he might not be so fortunate.

In this disturbed state of mind he withdrew

from the igloos and climbed the hill, where he stood and gazed longingly at the mainland hills to the southward, wondering where, beyond those cold, white ranges, lay Wolf Bight and his little cabin home, warm and clean and tidy, and whether his mother and father and Emily thought him safe or had heard of his disappearance and were mourning him as dead. And here he was far, far away in the north and hopelessly—apparently—stranded upon a desolate island from which he would probably never escape and never see them again.

Oh, how lonely and disconsolate he felt. Every day since he left home he had prayed God to keep the loved ones safe and to take him back to them.

"I hopes they're safe an' Emily's better, but th' Lard's been losin' track o' me," he said to himself with a wavering faith.

"But th' Lard took me safe t' Ungava, an' He must be watchin' me," he exclaimed after further thought. "An' He's been rare good t' me."

Then like a bulwark to lean against there came to him the words of his mother as they parted that beautiful September morning:

"Don't forget your prayers, lad, an' remember

your mother's prayin' for you every night an' every mornin'."

And Emily had said, too, that she would ask God every night to keep him safe. This brought him a renewal of his faith and he argued,

"Th' Lard'll sure not be denyin' mother an' Emily, an' they askin' He every day t' bring me back. He sure would not be denyin' they for He knows how bad 'twould be makin' they feel if I were not comin' home. An' He wouldn't be wantin' *that*, for they never does nothin' t' make He cross with un."

This thought comforted him and he said confidently to himself,

"Th' Lard'll be showin' th' way when th' right time comes an' I'll try t' bide content till then."

But there was little in the surroundings to warrant Bob's faith. Looking about him from the hilltop he could see nothing but open sea around the island with an expanse of desolation beyond—snow, snow everywhere, from the water's edge to where the rugged mountains to the south and east held their cold heads into the gray clouds that hid the sky and sun. The sea was sombre and black. Not a breath of air stirred, not a sound broke the silence and it

seemed almost as though Nature in anxious suspense watched the outcome of it all. But Bob's faith was renewed—the simple, childlike faith of his people—and he felt better and more content with himself and his fortune.

It was growing dusk when he returned to the igloos. As he descended the hill a flake of snow struck his face and it was followed by others. A breath of wind like a blast from a bellows swirled the flakes abroad. The elements were awakening.

In the igloos Akonuk and Matuk were brewing tea for supper and the three ate in silence.

Bob asked once,

"What's to be done with Chealuk?"

"Nothing," they answered laconically.

This relieved the anxiety he felt for her, and he crawled into his sleeping bag and went to sleep, thinking that after all the judgment of the Angakok was a mere form, not to be executed literally.

After some hours Bob awoke. The wind was blowing a gale outside. He could hear it quite distinctly. From what direction it came he could not tell, and after lying awake for a long while he decided to arise and see

When he removed the block of snow from the igloo entrance and crawled outside he was all but smothered by the swirling snow of a terrific, raging blizzard. He turned his back to the blast, and realized that it came from the north-east. The cold was piercing and awful. The elements which had been held in subjection for so long were unleashed and were venting themselves with all the untamed fury of the North upon the world.

As he turned to reënter the igloo an apparition brushed past him rushing off into the night.

"Who is it?" he shouted.

But the wind brought back no answer and overcome with a feeling of trepidation and a sense of impending tragedy, half believing that he had seen a ghost, he crawled back to his cover and warm sleeping bag to wonder.

There was no cessation in the storm or change in the conditions the next day. In the morning while they were drinking their hot tea Bob told Akonuk and Matuk of the apparition he had seen in the night.

"That," they said in awe, "was the spirit of Torngak," and Bob was duly impressed.

Upon a visit later to the other igloos he

missed Chealuk. She had always sat in one corner plying her needle, and had always had a word for him when he came in to pay a visit. Her absence was therefore noticeable and Bob asked one of the Eskimos where she was.

"Gone," said the Eskimo

And this was all he could learn from them. Poor old Chealuk had been sent away, and it must have been she, then, that he had seen in the darkness.

That night Bob was aroused again, and he immediately realized that something of moment had occurred. Akonuk and Matuk were awake and talking excitedly, and through the shrieking of the gale outside came a distinct and unusual sound. It was like the roar of distant thunder, but still it was not thunder. He sat up sharply to learn the meaning of it all.

XXI

ADRIFT ON THE ICE

THE unusual sound that Bob heard was the pounding of ice driven by the mighty force of wind and tide against the island rocks. This the Eskimos verified with many exclamations of delight. The hoped for had happened and release from their imprisonment was at hand. Bob thanked God for remembering them.

"I were thinkin' th' Lard would not be losin' sight o' me now He's been so watchful in all th' other times I were needin' help," said he as he lay down.

To the Eskimos it was a proof of the efficacy of the appeal to the Angakok.

During the next day the high wind and snow continued until dusk. Then the weather began to calm and before morning the sky was clear and the stars shining cold and brilliant, and the sun rose clear and beautiful. Kangeva Bay, a solid field of ice again, as it was when Bob first

saw it, stretched away unbroken and white to the northward.

No time was lost in making preparations for their escape. The komatiks were packed at once with the camp goods and the little food that still remained, the dogs were harnessed and a quick march took them safely to the mainland.

Here the Eskimos had an ample cache of seal and walrus meat killed earlier in the season. New igloos were built, as the old ones in use before they transferred to the island were not considered comfortable, the previous occupancy having softened the interior snow, which was now encrusted with a thin glaze of ice and this glaze prevented a free circulation of air.

Bob wanted to go on without delay but Akonuk and Matuk had found none of the Eskimos willing to proceed with him. It was therefore necessary for them to go with him until another camp was reached, and they insisted upon delaying the start a day in order as they said to give the dogs a good feed and get them in better shape for the journey, as they for some time had been fed only each alternate day instead of every day as was customary, and even then had

received but half their usual portion. This seemed quite reasonable, but when Bob saw his friends a little later consuming raw seal meat themselves in enormous quantities, he concluded that the dogs were not the only object of their consideration.

They were still busily engaged arranging their new quarters when one of the Eskimos called the attention of the others to a black object far out upon the ice in the direction from which they had come. Slowly it tottered towards them and in a little while it was made out to be old Chealuk, who had been in hiding somewhere on the island. The poor old woman, nearly starved and with frozen hands and feet, was barely able to drag herself into camp. Some of the men protested against receiving her but she was finally permitted to enter the igloos and take up her old place, though with the understanding that she should leave again immediately at the first indication of Torngak's displeasure.

It was a great relief to Bob to know that she had not perished. The old woman had only been able to keep from freezing to death, as he learned, by hollowing out a place in a snow-bank in which to lie and letting the snow drift thickly

over her and remaining there until the storm had spent itself.

"Sure I'm glad t' see she back again," thought Bob, and he voiced the sentiment to Matuk.

"Atsuk"—I don't know—said the Eskimo with a shrug of the shoulders.

While, as we have seen, none of the Eskimos would take the place of Akonuk and Matuk, they gave them sufficient seal meat and blubber for a two weeks' journey, and early the next morning the march eastward was resumed.

Bob was now driven to eating seal meat, as all his other provisions were exhausted, though, fortunately, he still had an abundance of tea. He had often eaten seal meat at home and was rather fond of it when it was properly cooked, but now no wood with which to make a fire was to be had. The land was absolutely barren, and even the moss was so deeply hidden beneath the snow it could not be resorted to for this purpose. Evenings in the igloo he boiled some meat over the stone lamp—enough to last him through the following day—but at best he could get it but partially cooked. However, he soon learned not to mind this much, for hunger is the best imaginable sauce, and in the cold of the Arctic

north one can eat with a relish what could not be endured in a milder climate.

For several days they traversed mountain passes where they were shut in by towering, rugged peaks which seemed to reach to the very heavens. Bleak and desolate as the landscape was it possessed a magnificence and grandeur that demanded admiration and called forth Bob's constant wonder. He would gaze up at the mysterious white summits and ejaculate,

"'Tis grand! 'Tis wonderful grand!"

Such mountains he had never seen before, and like all wilderness dwellers he was a lover of Nature's beauties and a close observer of her wonders.

It was near the middle of April now and the sun's rays, reflected by the snow, were growing dazzlingly bright and beginning to affect their eyes. Goggles should have been worn as a protection against this glare but they had none and did not trouble to make them until one night Matuk found that he was overtaken by a slight attack of snow-blindness. This is an extremely painful affliction which does not permit the sufferer to approach the light or, in fact, so much as open his eyes without experiencing agony

The sensation is that of having innumerable splinters driven into the eyeballs with the lids when opened and closed grating over the splinters.

While they were waiting for Matuk to recover his eyesight Akonuk and Bob removed one of the wooden cross-bars from the komatik and with their knives cut from it three pieces each long enough to fit over the eyes for a pair of goggles. These were rounded to fit the face and a place whittled out for the nose to fit into. Then hollow places were cut large enough to permit the eyelids to open and close in them, and opposite each eye hollow a narrow slit for the wearer to look through. Then the interior of the eye places were blackened with smoke from the stone lamp, and a thong of sealskin was fastened to each end of the goggles with which to tie them in place upon the head.

Thus a pair of goggles was ready for each when, after a three days' rest Matuk's eyes were well enough for him to continue the journey, and by constantly wearing them on days when the sun shone, further danger of snow-blindness was averted.

Two days later, upon emerging from a moun-

tain pass, they suddenly saw stretching far away to the eastward the great ocean ice. The sight sent the blood tingling through Bob's veins. Nearly half the journey from Ungava to Eskimo Bay had been accomplished!

"Th' coast! Th' coast!" shouted Bob. "Now I'll be gettin' home inside a month!"

He began at once to plan the surprise he had in store for the folk and an early trip that he would make over to the Post, when he would tell Bessie about his great "cruise" and hear her say that she was glad to see him back again. But Fortune does not wait upon human plans and Bob's fortitude was yet to be tried as it never had been tried before.

That afternoon an Eskimo village of snow igloos was reached. The Eskimos swarmed out to meet the visitors and gave them a whole-souled welcome, and in an hour they were quite settled for a brief stay in the new quarters.

Akonuk told Bob that now after the dogs, which were very badly spent, had a few days in which to rest, he and Matuk would turn back to Ungava. They would try to arrange for two more Eskimos with a fresh team to go on with him, but as for themselves, even were the dogs in

condition to travel, they did not know the trail beyond this point.

The Eskimos here, like those they had met on the island at Kangeva, were engaged in seal hunting, and none of the men seemed to care to leave their work for a long, hard journey south. They did not say, however, that they would not go. When they were asked their answer was:

"In a little while—perhaps."

This was very unsatisfactory to Bob in his anxious frame of mind. But he had learned that Eskimos must be left to bide their time, and that no amount of coaxing would hurry them, so he tried to await their moods in patience. He understood the reluctance of the men to go away during one of the best hunting seasons of the year and could not find fault with them for it.

The seals were the mainstay of their living and to lose the hunt might mean privation. They were in need of the skins for clothing, kayaks and summer tents, and the flesh and blubber for food for themselves and their dogs, and the oil for their stone lamps.

Later in the season they would harpoon the animals from their kayaks, but this was the great harvest time when they killed them by spearing

through holes in the ice where the seals came at intervals to breathe, for a seal will die unless it can get fresh air occasionally. Early in the morning each Eskimo would take up his position near one of these breathing holes, and there, with spear poised, not moving so much as a foot, sometimes for hours at a time, await patiently the appearance of a seal, which, having many similar holes, might not chance to come to this particular one the whole day.

The spear used had a long, wooden handle, with a barbed point made of metal or ivory, and so arranged that the barbed point came off the handle after it had been driven into the animal. To the point was fastened one end of a long seal-skin line, the other end of which the hunter tied about his waist.

The moment a seal's nose made its appearance at the breathing hole the watchful Eskimo drove the spear into its body. Then began a tug of war between man and seal, and sometimes the Eskimos had narrow escapes from being pulled into the holes.

The seals of Labrador, it should be explained, are the hair, and not the fur seals such as are found in the Alaskan waters and the South Sea

There are five varieties of them, the largest of which is the hood seal and the smallest the doter or harbour seal. The square flipper also grows to a very large size. The other two kinds are the jar and the harp.

These all have different names applied to them according to their age. Thus a new-born harp is a "puppy," then a "white coat"; when it is old enough to take to the water, which is within a fortnight after birth, it becomes a "paddler," a little later a "bedlamer," then a "young harp" and finally a harp. The handsomest of them all is the "ranger," as the young doter is called.

Finally, one evening when all the men were assembled in the igloos after their day's hunt, Akonuk announced that he and Matuk were to return home the next morning. This renewed the discussion as to who should go on with Bob, and the upshot of it was that two young fellows—Netseksoak and Aluktook—with the promise that Mr. Forbes would reward them for aiding to bring the letters which Bob carried, volunteered to make the journey.

This settled the matter to Bob's satisfaction and it was agreed that, as the season was far advanced, it would be necessary to start at once in

order to give the two men time to reach home again before the spring break-up of the ice.

Long before daylight the next morning the Eskimos were lashing the load on the komatik and at dawn the dogs were harnessed and everything ready. Bob said good-bye to Akonuk and Matuk and the two teams took different directions and were soon lost to each other's view.

"'Twill not be long now," said Bob to himself, "an' we gets t' th' Bay."

The sun at midday was now so warm that it softened the snow, which, freezing towards evening, made a hard ice crust over which the komatik slipped easily and permitted of very fast travelling until the snow began to soften again towards noon. Therefore the early part of the day was to be taken advantage of.

The new team, containing eleven dogs, was really made up of two small teams, one of six dogs belonging to Netseksoak and the other of five dogs the property of Aluktook. At first the two sets of dogs were inclined to be quarrelsome and did not work well together. At the very start they had a pitched battle which resulted in the crippling of Aluktook's leader to such an extent that for two days it was almost useless.

However, with the good going fast time was made. Usually they kept to the sea ice, but sometimes took short cuts across necks of land where, as had been the case near Ungava, the men had to haul on the traces with the dogs.

The new drivers were much younger men than Akonuk and Matuk and they were in many respects more companionable. But Bob missed a sort of fatherly interest that the others had shown in him and did not rely so implicitly upon their judgment.

Able now as he was to understand very much of their conversation, he took part in the discussion of various routes and expressed his opinion as to them; and the Eskimos, who at first had looked upon him as a more or less inexperienced kablunok, soon began to feel that he knew nearly as much about dog and komatik travelling as they did themselves. Thus a sort of good fellowship developed at once.

One evening after a hard day's travelling as they came over the crest of a hill the first grove of trees that Bob had seen since shortly after leaving Ungava came in sight. It was the most welcome thing that had met his view in weeks, and when the dogs were turned to its edge and

he saw a small shack, he knew that he was nearing again the white man's country.

The shack was found to have no occupants, but it contained a sheet iron stove such as he had used in his tilts, and that night he revelled in the warmth of a fire and a feast of boiled ptarmigan and tea.

"'Tis like gettin' back t' th' Bay," said Bob, and he asked the Eskimos, "Will there be igloosoaks (shacks) all the way?"

"Igloosoaks every night," answered Aluktook.

The following morning a westerly breeze was blowing and the Eskimos were uncertain whether to keep to the land or follow the sea ice along the shore. The former route, they explained to Bob, passed over high hills and was much the harder and longer one of the two, but safer. The ice route along the shore was smooth and could be accomplished much more quickly, but at this season of the year was fraught with more or less danger. For many miles the shore rose in precipitous rocks, and should a westerly gale arise while they were passing this point, the ice was likely to break away and no escape could be made to the shore. The wind blowing then from the West was not strong enough yet, they

said, to cause any trouble, and they did not think it would rise, but still it was uncertain.

"Which way should they go?"

Bob's experience at Kangeva made him hesitate for a moment, but his impatience to reach home quickly got the better of his judgment; and, especially as the Eskimos seemed inclined to prefer the outside route, he joined them in their preference and answered,

"We'll be goin' outside."

And the outside route they took.

All went well for a time, but hourly the wind increased. The dogs were urged on, but the wind kept blowing them to leeward and they began to show signs of giving out. Finally a veritable gale was blowing and the Eskimos' faces grew serious.

They were now opposite that part of the shore where it rose a perpendicular wall of rock towering a hundred feet above the sea, and offered no place of refuge. So they hurried on as best they could in the hope of rounding the walls and making land before the inevitable break came. Presently Aluktook shouted,

"Emuk! Emuk!"—the water! the water!

Bob and Netseksoak looked, and a ribbon

of black water lay between them and the shore.

They lashed the dogs and shouted at them until they were hoarse, in a vain effort to urge them on. The poor brutes lay to the ice and did their best, but it was quite hopeless. In an incredibly short time the ribbon had widened into a gulf a quarter of a mile wide. Then it grew to a mile, and presently the shore became a thin black line that was soon lost to view entirely. They were adrift on the wide Atlantic!

They stopped the dogs when they realized that further effort was useless and sat down on the komatik in impotent dismay.

The weather had grown intensely cold and the perspiration that the excitement and exertion had brought out upon their faces was freezing. Snow squalls were already beginning and before nightfall a blizzard was raging in all its awful fury and at any moment the ice pack was liable to go to pieces.

XXII

THE MAID OF THE NORTH

"THE'S no profit in this trade any more," said Captain Sam Hanks, as he sat down to supper with his mate, Jack Simmons, in the little cabin of his schooner, *Maid of the North*. "I won't get a seaman's wages out o' th' cruise, an' I'm sick o' workin' fer nothin'. Now there was a time before th' free traders done th' business t' death that a man could make good money on th' Labrador, but that time's past. They pays so much fer th' fur they's spoiled it fer everybody, an' I'm goin' t' quit."

"Th' free traders don't go north o' th' Straits much. Why don't ye try it there, sir?" suggested the mate.

"Ice. Too much ice. I've been thinkin' it over. Th' trouble is we couldn't get through th' ice in th' spring until after th' Hudson's Bay people had gobbled up everything. Th' natives down that coast is poor as Job's turkey, an' they has t' sell their fur soon's th' furrin' season's

over. I hears th' company gets th' fur from em fer a song. Them natives 'll give ye a silver fox fer a jackknife an' a barrel o' flour, an' a marten fer a gallon o' molasses. But the's money in it if a feller could get there in time," he added thoughtfully.

"What's th' matter with goin' down in th' fall before th' ice blocks th' coast? Th' *Maid o' th' North* is sheathed fer ice, an' we could freeze her in, some place down th' coast, an' be on hand t' sail when th' ice clears in th' spring. We could let th' folks know where we were t' freeze up, an' we'd pick up a lot o' fur before th' ice breaks, an' th' natives'd hold th' rest until we calls comin' south. The's a big chanct there," said the mate, conclusively.

"I dunno but yer right. I hadn't thought o' goin' down in th' fall t' freeze up. We'd have t' be gettin' t' our anchorage by th' first o' October."

"The's plenty o' time t' do that, sir. 'Twon't take more'n ten days t' fit out.'

"Then the's th' cost o' shippin' th' crew t' be taken into account, 'n havin' 'em doin' nothin' th' hull winter. I don't know's the'd be much in it after everythin's counted out."

"That's easy 'nuff fixed. Take a lot o' traps an' let th' crew hunt in th' winter. Ye wouldn't have t' pay 'em then when ye wasn't afloat. Ye could give 'em their keep an' let 'em hunt with th' traps on shore an' make a little outen 'em. The's always fools 'nuff as thinks they'll get rich if they has a chanct t' try their hand doin' somethin' they ain't been doin' before, an' you kin get a crew o' fellers like that easy 'nuff."

"I dunno. Maybe I kin an' maybe I can't. Sounds like it's worth tryin' an' I'll think about it."

Every spring for ten years Captain Hanks—Skipper Sam he was generally called—had sailed out of Halifax Harbour with his schooner *Maid of the North* to work his way into the Gulf of St. Lawrence when the waters were clear of ice, and trade a general cargo of merchandise for furs with the Indians and white trappers along the north shore and the Straits of Belle Isle—the southern Labrador.

At first he found the trade extremely lucrative, and during the first four or five years in which he was engaged in it accumulated a snug sum of money, the income of which would have been quite sufficient to keep him comfortably the re-

mainder of his life in the modest way in which he lived.

But Skipper Sam was much like other people, and the more he had the more he wanted, so he continued in the fur trade. The fact that he had purchased some city real estate for the purpose of speculation became known, and other skippers sailing schooners of their own, with an eye to lucrative trade, decided that "Skipper Sam must be havin' a darn good thing on th' Labrador," and when the *Maid of the North* made her fifth voyage she had another schooner to keep her company, and another skipper was on hand to compete with Skipper Sam.

Each year had brought additions to the trading fleet, and competition had raised the price of fur until now the trappers, with a ready market, were growing quite independent, and Skipper Sam, instead of paying what he pleased for the pelts, which, when he had a monopoly of the trade, was a merely nominal price as compared with their value, was forced in order to get them at all to pay more nearly their true worth.

Even now he was making a fair profit, but his mind constantly reverted to the "good old days" when his returns were from five hundred

to a thousand per cent. on his investment, and he felt injured and dissatisfied. At the end of every voyage he declared solemnly that he was no longer making more than seamen's wages and would quit the trade, and the mate, who was well aware of the captain's comfortable financial position, always believed he meant it.

It should be said to Captain Hanks' credit that he paid his mate and crew of five men the highest going wages, and treated them well and kindly So long as they attended strictly to their duties he was their friend. They were provided with the best of food and they appreciated the good treatment and were loyal to Captain Hanks' interest and very much attached to the *Maid of the North*, as seamen are to a good ship that for several voyages has been their home.

So it was that the mate made his suggestions so freely. If Captain Hanks were to quit the trade he knew that it would be many a day before he secured another such berth, and his solicitude was therefore not alone in the captain's interests but was largely a matter of looking out for himself.

The voyage just completed had not, in fact,

been a very profitable one, for the previous winter had been a poor year for the trappers that they dealt with, just as it had been farther north in Eskimo Bay, and Skipper Sam had good reason for feeling discouraged.

It was early in August now, and the *Maid of the North* was entering Halifax Harbour with the expectation of tying up at her berth the next morning. If she were to go north it would be necessary for her to be fitted out for the voyage immediately in order to reach her winter quarters before the ice began to form in the bays.

The two men ate their supper and both went on deck to smoke their pipes. Skipper Sam had no more to say about the proposed undertaking until late in the evening, when he called the mate to his cabin, where he had retired after his smoke, and there the mate found him poring over a chart.

"D'ye know anything about this coast?' the skipper asked, without looking up.

The mate glanced over his shoulder.

"Not much, sir. I was down on a fishin' cruise once when I was a lad."

"Well, how far down ought we t' go, d' ye think, before we lays up?"

"I think, sir, we should go north o' Indian Harbour. Th' farther north we gets, th' more fur we'll pick up."

"Well," said the skipper, standing up, "I'm goin' t' sail just as quick as I can fit out. Ship th' crew on th' best terms ye can. We got t' move smart, fer I wants time t' run well down before th' ice catches us."

"All right, sir."

Thus it happened that the *Maid of the North*, spick and span, with a new coat of paint on the outside, and a good stock of provisions and articles of trade in her hold, sailed out of Halifax Harbour and turned her prow to the northward on the first day of September, and was plowing her way to the Labrador at the very time that Bob Gray with his mother and Emily were returning so disconsolate to Wolf Bight after hearing the verdict of the mail boat doctor, and Bob was making the plans that carried him into the interior.

The *Maid of the North* called at many harbours by the way and the fame of Captain Hanks spread amongst the livyeres, as the native Labradormen are called. He told them what fabulous prices he would pay them for their furs in the

spring when he came south with open water, and they promised him to a man to reserve the bulk of their catch for him, and all had visions of coming wealth.

It was decided that they winter in the Harbour of God's Hope, just north of Cape Harrigan, and after passing Indian Harbour the natives were notified that if they wished any supplies during the winter they could bring their furs there and get what they needed.

The Harbour of God's Hope was found to be a deep, narrow inlet, not as well protected from the sea as might be desired, but still comparatively well sheltered, and particularly advantageous from the fact that the shores of the upper end of the inlet were wooded, an essential feature, as it provided an abundance of good fuel, and the supply on board was far from adequate for their needs.

The *Maid of the North* was made as snug as possible for the freeze-up, but could not be brought as close to shore as desirable, because of shoals. However, her position was deemed quite safe, and Skipper Sam experienced a sense of supreme satisfaction at his achievements and the prospects for a profitable trade in the spring

The crew were put at work immediately to build a log shack for shore quarters, which was shortly accomplished. This shack was of ample size and was furnished with a stove brought from Halifax for the purpose, some chairs, a table and a kitchen outfit.

The skipper, the mate and the cook remained on board at first, but the crew were given permission to go ashore and hunt and trap in the hills back of the harbour, an opportunity of which they promptly took advantage.

As the cold weather came on and the ice formed thick and hard around the vessel it seemed unnecessary to keep a watch aboard, and as the shack was much more roomy than the cabin, and therefore more comfortable, all hands finally took up their quarters in it.

As the winter wore on livyeres began to pay frequent visits to Skipper Sam from up and down the coast, and they all brought furs to trade. With the approach of spring the skipper found to his satisfaction that he had already collected more pelts than he had been able to purchase on his previous spring's voyage in the South, and at prices that even to him seemed ridiculously low. These furs were duly stored aboard the *Maid of*

the North, and by the first of May she had a cargo that could have been disposed of in Halifax or Montreal for several thousand dollars.

It was at this time that the skipper suggested to the mate one evening,

"Jack, les go caribou huntin' t'-morrer. I'm gettin' stiff hangin' 'round here."

"All right, sir," acquiesced the mate, "but," he asked, "th' crew's all away exceptin' th' cook, an' who'll look after things here if we both goes t' once?"

"We kin leave the cook alone fer one day I guess. If any o' th' livyeres come he kin keep 'em till we comes back in th' evenin'."

The arrangements were therefore made for the hunt, and the following morning bright and early they were off.

At sunrise there was a slight westerly breeze blowing, and the skipper suggested,

"Th' wind might stiffen up a bit an' we better keep an eye to it."

They were well back in the hills before the predicted stiffening came to such an extent that they decided it was wise to return to the shack.

Skipper Sam and his mate were not accustomed to land travelling and the hurried retreat

soon winded them and they were held down to so slow a walk that the afternoon was half spent and the wind had grown to a gale when they finally came in view of the harbour. Skipper Sam was ahead, and when he looked towards the place where the *Maid of the North* had been snugly held in the ice in the morning he rubbed his eyes. Then he looked again, and exclaimed :

" By gum ! "

The harbour was clear of ice and nowhere on the horizon was the *Maid of the North* to be seen. The gale had swept the ice to sea and carried with it the *Maid of the North* and all her valuable cargo. The cook, asleep in his bunk in the shack, was quite unconscious of the calamity when the skipper roused him to demand explanations.

But there were no explanations to be given. The schooner was gone, that was all, and Captain Sam Hanks and his crew were stranded upon the coast of Labrador.

XXIII

THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE

BOB and his companions were indeed in a most desperate situation, and even they, accustomed and inured as they were to the vicissitudes and rigours of the North, could see no possible way of escape. Men of less courage or experience would probably have resigned themselves to their fate at once, without one further effort to preserve their lives, and in an hour or two have succumbed to the bitter cold of the storm. But these men had learned to take events as they came largely as a matter of course, and they did not for a moment lose heart or self-control.

The dogs were driven a little farther towards the interior of the ice, for if the pack were to break up the outer edge would be the first to go. Here immediate preparations were made to camp.

There was no bank from which snow blocks could be cut for an igloo, and the blinding

snow so obscured their surroundings that they could not so much as find a friendly ice hummock to take refuge behind. The gale, in fact, was so fierce that they could scarce hold their feet against it, and had they released their hold of the komatik even for an instant, it is doubtful if they could have found it again.

The deerskin sleeping bags were unlashed and the sledge turned upon its side. In the lee of this the bags were stretched upon the ice and with their skin clothes on they crawled into them. Each called "Oksunae"—be strong—have courage—to the others, and then drew his head within the folds of his skin covering.

Bob wore the long, warm coat that Manikawan had made for him, and as he snuggled close into the bag he thought of her kindness to him, and he dreamed that night that he had gone back and found her waiting for him and looking just as she did the morning she waved him farewell, as she stood in the light of the cold winter moon—tall and graceful and comely, with the tears glistening in her eyes.

The dogs, still in harness, lay down where they stood, and in a little while the snow, which found lodgment against the komatik, covered

men and dogs alike in one big drift and the weary travellers slept warm and well regardless of the fact that at any moment the ice might part and they be swallowed up by the sea.

The storm was one of those sudden outbursts of anger that winter in his waning power inflicts upon the world in protest against the coming spring supplanting him, and as a reminder that he still lives and carries with him his withering rod of chastisement and breath of destruction. But he was now so old and feeble that in a single night his strength was spent, and when morning dawned the sun arose with a new warmth and the wind had ceased to blow.

The men beneath the snow did not move. It was quite useless for them to get up. There was nothing that they could do, and they might as well be sleeping as wandering aimlessly about the ice field.

The dogs, however, thought differently. They had not been fed the previous night, and bright and early they were up, nosing about within the limited area afforded them by the length of their traces. One of them began to dig away the snow around the komatik. He paused, held his nose into the drift a moment and

sniffed, then went vigorously to work again with his paws. Soon he grabbed something in his fangs. The others joined him, and the snarling and fighting that ensued aroused Bob and the sleeping Eskimos.

Aluktook was the first to throw off the snow and look out to see what the trouble was about. Then he shouted and jumped to his feet, kicking the dogs with all his power. Bob and Netsek-soak sprang to his aid, but they were too late.

The dogs had devoured every scrap of food they had, save some tea that Bob kept in a small bag in which he carried his few articles of dunnage.

This was a terrible condition of affairs, for though they were doubtless doomed to drown with the first wind strong enough to shatter the ice, still the love of living was strong within them, and they must eat to live.

Separating and going in different directions, the three hunted about in the vain hope that somewhere on the ice there might be seals that they could kill, but nowhere was there to be seen a living thing—nothing but one vast field of ice reaching to the horizon on the north, east and south. To the west the water sparkled in the

sunlight, but no land and no life, human or otherwise, was within the range of vision.

After a time they returned to their bivouac and then drove the dogs a little farther into the ice pack to a high hummock that Aluktook had found, and with an axe and snow knives cut blocks of ice from the hummock and snow from a drift on its lee side, and finally had a fairly substantial igloo built. This they made as comfortable as possible, and settled in it as the last shelter they should ever have in the world, as they all firmly believed it would prove.

They were now driven to straits by thirst, but there was not a drop of water, save the salt sea water, to be had.

"We'll have to burn the komatik," said Aluktook

Netseksoak knocked two or three cross-bars from it and built a miniature fire, using the wood with the greatest possible economy, and by this means melted a kettle of ice, and Bob brewed some tea.

The warm drink was stimulating, and gave them renewed ambition. They separated again in search of game, but again returned, towards evening, empty handed.

"Too late for seals," the Eskimos remarked laconically.

All were weak from lack of food, and when they gathered at the igloo it was decided that one of the dogs must be killed.

"We'll eat Amulik, he's too old to work anyway," suggested Netseksoak.

Amulik, the dog thus chosen for the sacrifice, was a fine old fellow, one of Netseksoak's dogs that had braved the storms of many winters. The poor brute seemed to understand the fate in store for him, for he slunk away when he saw Netseksoak loading his gun. But his retreat was useless, and in a little while his flesh was stored in the igloo and the Eskimos were dining upon it uncooked.

Though Bob was, of course, very hungry, he declined to eat raw dog meat, and to cook it was quite out of the question, for the little wood contained in the komatik he realized must be reserved for melting ice, as otherwise they would have nothing to drink. Another day, however, and he was so driven to the extremes of hunger that he was glad to take his share of the raw meat which to his astonishment he found not only most palatable but delicious, for there is a time

that comes to every starving man when even the most vile and putrid refuse can be eaten with a relish.

The dog meat was carefully divided into daily portions for each man. Some of it, of course, had to go to the remaining animals, to keep them alive to be butchered later, if need be, for this was the only source of food the destitute men had.

Every day Bob and the Eskimos wandered over the ice, hoping against hope that some means of escape might be found. Bob realized that nothing but the hand of Providence, by some supernatural means, could save him now. Again he said,

"Th' Lard this time has sure been losin' track o' me. Maybe 'tis because when He were showin' me a safe trail over th' hills I were not willin' t' bide His time an' go that way, but were comin' by th' ice after th' warnin' at Kangeva."

But he always ended his musings with the comfortable recollection of his mother's prayers, which had helped him so much before, and this did more than anything else to keep him courageous and brave.

The days came and went, each as empty as its

predecessor, and each night brought less probability of escape than the night before.

Another dog was killed, and a week passed.

The komatik wood was nearly gone, although but one small fire was built each day, and the end of their tea was in sight.

This was the state of affairs when Bob wandered one day farther to the southward over the pack ice than usual, and suddenly saw in the distance a moving object. At first he imagined that it was a bit of moving ice, so near was it to the colour of the field. This was quite impossible, however, and approaching it stealthily, he soon discovered that it was a polar bear.

The animal was wandering leisurely to the south. Bob carried the rifle that Mr. MacPherson had given him, as he always did on these occasions, and keeping in the lee of ice hummocks, that he might not be seen by the bear, ran noiselessly forward. Finally he was within shooting distance and, raising the gun, took aim and fired.

Perhaps it was because of weakness through improper food, or possibly as the result of too much eagerness, but the aim was unsteady and

the bullet only grazed and slightly wounded the bear.

The brute growled and turned to see what it was that had struck him. When it discovered its enemy it rose on its haunches and offered battle.

Bob was for a moment paralyzed by the immense proportions that the bear displayed, and almost forgot that he had more bullets at his disposal. But he quickly recalled himself and throwing a cartridge into the chamber, aimed the rifle more carefully and fired again. This time the bullet went true to the mark, and the great body fell limp to the ice.

As he surveyed the carcass a moment later he patted his rifle, and said;

"'Tis sure a rare fine gun. I ne'er could ha' killed un wi' my old un.". "Now th' Lard *must* be watchin' me or He wouldn't ha' sent th' bear, an' He wouldn't ha' sent un if He weren't wantin' us t' live. Th' Lard must be hearin' mother's an' Emily's prayers now, after all—He must be."

The bear was a great windfall. It would give Bob and the Eskimos food for themselves and oil for their lamp, and the lad was imbued with new

hope as he hurried off to summon Netseksoak and Aluktook to aid him in bringing the carcass to the igloo.

The afternoon was well advanced before he found the two Eskimos, and when he told them of his good fortune they were very much elated, and all three started back immediately to the scene of the bear hunt. As they approached it Aluktook shouted an exclamation and pointed towards the south. Bob and Netseksoak looked, and there, dimly outlined in the distance but still plainly distinguishable, was the black hull of a vessel with two masts glistening in the sunshine.

"'Tis th' hand o' Providence!" exclaimed Bob.

The three shook hands and laughed and did everything to show their delight short of hugging each other, and then ran towards the vessel, suddenly possessed of a vague fear that it might sail away before they were seen. Bob fired several shots out of his rifle as he ran, to attract the attention of the crew, but as they approached they could see no sign of life, and they soon found that it was a schooner frozen tight and fast in the ice pack.

When they at last reached it Bob read, painted in bold letters, the name, "Maid of the North."

XXIV

THE ESCAPE

THEY lost no time in climbing on deck, and what was their astonishment when they reached there to find the vessel quite deserted. Everything was in spick and span order both in the cabin and above decks. It was now nearly dark and an examination of her hold had to be deferred until the following day. One thing was certain, however. No one had occupied the cabin for some time, and no one had boarded or left the vessel since the last snow-storm, for no footprints were to be found on the ice near her.

It was truly a great mystery, and the only solution that occurred to Bob was that the ice pack had "pinched" the schooner and opened her up below, and the crew had made a hurried escape in one of the boats. This he knew sometimes occurred on the coast, and if it were the case, and her hull had been crushed below the water line, it was of course only a question of the ice breaking up, which might occur at any time, when she

would go to the bottom. There was one small boat on deck, and if an examination in the morning disclosed the unseaworthiness of the craft, this small boat would at least serve them as a means of escape from the ice pack.

Whatever the condition of the vessel, the night was calm and the ice was hard, and there was no probability of a break-up that would release her from her firm fastenings before morning; and they decided, therefore, to make themselves comfortable aboard. There was a stove in the cabin and another in the forecastle, plenty of blankets were in the berths, and provisions—actual luxuries—down forward. Bob was afraid that it was a dream and that he would wake up presently to the realities of the igloo and raw dog meat, and the hopelessness of it all.

He and the Eskimos lighted the lamps, started a fire in the galley stove, put the kettle over, fried some bacon, and finally sat down to a feast of bacon, tea, ship's biscuit, butter, sugar, and even jam to top off with. It was the best meal, Bob declared, that he had ever eaten in all his life.

"An' if un turns out t' be a dream, 'twill be th' finest kind o' one." was his emphatic decision

How the three laughed and talked and enjoyed themselves over their supper, and how Bob revelled in the soft, warm blankets of Captain Hanks' berth when he finally, for the first time in weeks, was enabled to undress and crawl into bed, can better be imagined than described.

After an early breakfast the next morning the first care was to examine the hold, and very much to their satisfaction, and at the same time mystification, for they could not now understand why the schooner had been abandoned, they found the hull quite sound and the schooner to all appearances perfectly seaworthy.

Another astonishment awaited Bob, too, when he came upon the quantities of fur, and the stock of provisions and other goods that he found below decks.

"'Tis enough t' stock a company's post!" he exclaimed. But its real intrinsic value was quite beyond his comprehension.

When it was settled, beyond doubt, that the *Maid of the North* was entirely worthy of their confidence and in no danger of sinking, the three returned to the igloo and transferred their sleeping bags and few belongings, as well as the dogs to their new quarters on board of her

After this was done they skinned and dressed the polar bear, which still lay upon the ice where it had been killed, and some of the flesh was fed to the half famished dogs. Bob insisted upon giving them an additional allowance, after the two Eskimos had fed them, for he said that they, too, should share in the good fortune, though Netseksoak expressed the opinion that the dogs ought to have been quite satisfied to escape being eaten.

The choicest cuts of the bear's meat the men kept for their own consumption, and Bob rescued the liver also, when Aluktook was about to throw it to the dogs, for he was very fond of caribou liver and saw no reason why that of the polar bear should not prove just as palatable. He fried some of it for supper, but when he placed it on the table both Aluktook and Netseksoak refused to touch it, declaring it unfit to eat, and warned Bob against it.

"There's an evil spirit in it," they said with conviction, "and it makes men sick."

This was very amusing to Bob, and disregarding their warning he ate heartily of it himself, wondering all the time what heathen superstition it was that prejudiced Eskimos against

such good food, for, as he had observed, they would usually eat nearly anything in the way of flesh, and a great many things that he would not eat.

In a little while Bob began to realize that something was wrong. He felt queerly, and was soon attacked with nausea and vomiting. For two or three days he was very sick indeed and the Eskimos both told him that it was the effect of the evil spirit in the liver, and that he would surely die, and for a day or so he believed that he really should.

Whether the bear liver was under the curse of evil spirits or was in itself poisonous were questions that did not interest Bob. He knew it had made him sick and that was enough for him, and what remained of the liver went to the dogs, when he was able to be about again.

The days passed wearily enough for the men in their floating prison, impatient as they were at their enforced inactivity, but still helpless to do anything to quicken their release. May was dragging to an end and June was at hand, and still the ice pack, firm and unbroken, refused to loose its bands. Slowly—imperceptibly to the watchers on board the *Maid of the North*—it

was drifting to the southward on the bosom of the Arctic current. But the sun, constantly gaining more power, was rotting the ice, and it was inevitable that sooner or later the pack must fall to pieces and release the schooner and its occupants from their bondage. Then would come another danger. If the wind blew strong and the seas ran high, the heavy pans of ice pounding against the hull might crush it in and send the vessel to the bottom. Therefore, while longing for release, there was at the same time an element of anxiety connected with it.

Finally the looked for happened. One afternoon a heavy bank of clouds, black and ominous, appeared in the western sky. A light puff of wind presaged the blow that was to follow, and in a little while the gale was on.

The *Maid of the North*, it will be understood, lay in bay ice, and all the ice to the south of her was bay ice. This was much lighter than that coming from more northerly points, and when the open sea which skirted the western edge of the field began to rise and sweep in upon this rotten ice the waves crumbled and crumpled it up before their mighty force like a piece of card-

board. It was a time of the most intense anxiety for the three men.

Just at dusk, amid the roar of wind and smashing ice, the vessel gave a lurch, and suddenly she was free. Fortunately her rudder was not carried away, as they had feared it would be, and when she answered the helm, Bob whispered,

"Thank th' Lard."

They were at the mercy of the wind during the next few hours, and there was little that could be done to help themselves until towards morning, when the gale subsided. Then, with daylight, under short sail they began working the vessel out of the "slob" ice that surrounded it, and before dark that night were in the open sea, with now only a moderate breeze blowing, which fortunately had shifted to the northward.

Here they found themselves beset by a new peril. Icebergs, great, towering, fearsome masses, lay all about them, and to make matters worse a thick gray fog settled over the ocean, obscuring everything ten fathoms distant. They brought the vessel about and lay to in the wind, but even then drifted dangerously near one towering ice mass, and once a berg that could not have been half a mile away turned over with a terrifying

roar. It seemed as though a collision was inevitable before daylight, but the night passed without mishap, and when the morning sun lifted the fog the ship was still unharmed.

There was no land anywhere to be seen. What position they were in Bob did not know, and had no way of finding out. He did know, however, that somewhere to the westward lay the Labrador coast, and this they must try to reach.

Fortunately he could read the compass, and by its aid took as nearly as possible a due westerly course.

Alutook and Netseksoak, expert as they were in the handling of kayaks, had no knowledge of the management of larger craft like the *Maid of the North*, and without question accepted Bob as commander and followed his directions implicitly and faithfully; and he handled the vessel well, for he was a good sailor, as all lads of the Labrador are.

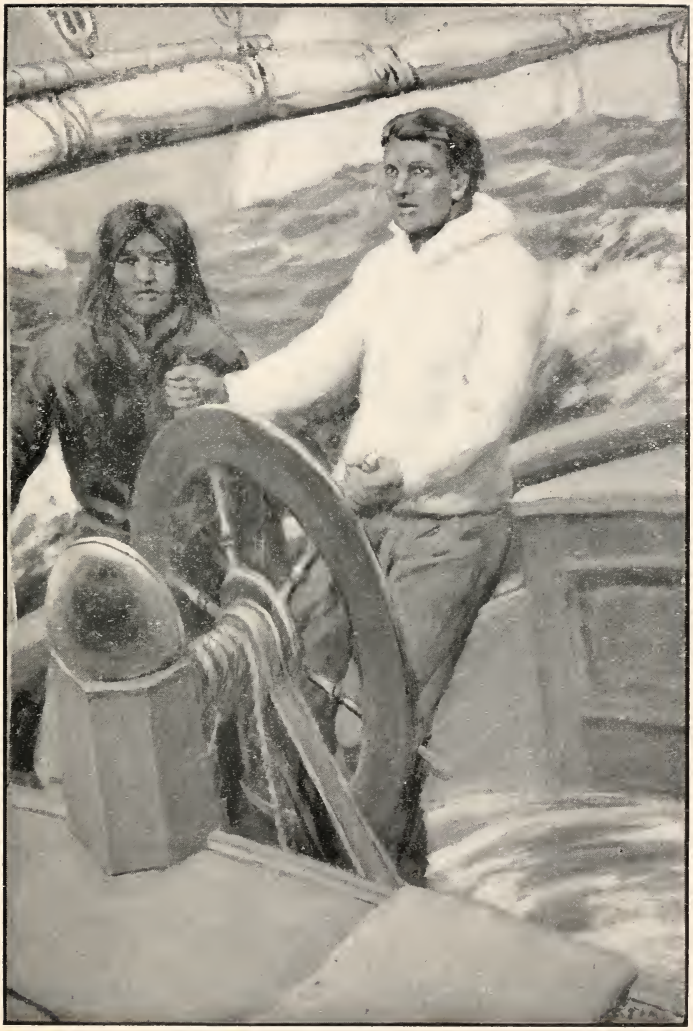
They made excellent headway, and were favoured with a season of good weather, and like the barometer Bob's spirits rose. But he dared to plan nothing beyond the present action. A hundred times he had planned and pictured the home-coming, but each time Fate, or the will of

a Providence that he could not understand, had intervened, and with the crushing of each new hope and the wiping out of each delightful picture that his imagination drew, he decided to look not into the future, but do his best in the present and trust to Providence for the rest, for, as he expressed it,

"Th' Lard's makin' His own plans an' He's not wantin' me t' be meddlin' wi' un, an' so He's not lettin' me do th' way I lays out t' do, an' I'll be makin' no more plans, but takin' things as they comes along."

In this frame of mind he held the vessel steadily to her course and kept a constant lookout for land or a sail, and on the morning of the third day after the release from the ice pack was rewarded by a shout from Netseksoak announcing land at last. Eagerly he looked, and in the distance, dimly, but still there, appeared the shore in low, dark outline against the horizon.

Towards noon a sail was sighted, and late in the afternoon they passed within hailing distance of a fishing schooner bound down north. He shouted to the fishermen who, at the rail, were curiously watching the *Maid of the North*, as she plowed past them.



"He held the vessel steadily to her course"

"What land may that be?" pointing at a high, rocky head that jutted out into the water two miles away.

"Th' Devil's Head," came the reply.

"An' what's th' day o' th' month?"

"Th' fifteenth o' June," rang out the answer. "Where un hail from?"

"Ungava," Bob shouted to the astonished skipper, who was now almost out of hearing.

The information that the land was the Devil's Head came as joyful news to Bob. He had often heard of the Devil's Head, and knew that it lay not far from the entrance to Eskimo Bay, and therefore in a little while he believed he should see some familiar landmarks.

Bob's hopes were confirmed, and before dark the Twin Rocks near Scrag Island were sighted, and as they came into view his heart swelled and his blood tingled. He was almost home!

That night they lay behind Scrag Island, and with the first dawn of the morning were under way again. The wind was fair, and before sunset the *Maid of the North* sailed into Fort Pelican Harbour and anchored.

Bob's heart beat high as he stepped into the small boat to row ashore, for the whitewashed

buildings of the Post, the air redolent with the perfume of the forest, and the howling dogs told him that at last the dangers of the trail and sea were all behind him and of the past, and that he would soon be at home again.

Mr. Forbes was at the wharf when Bob landed, and when he saw who it was exclaimed in astonishment:

"Why it's Bob Gray! Where in the world, or what spirit land did you come from? Why Ed Matheson brought your remains out of the bush last winter and I hear they were buried the other day."

"I comes from Ungava, sir, with some letters Mr. MacPherson were sendin'," answered Bob, as he made the painter fast.

"Letters from Ungava! Well, come to the office and we'll see them. I want to hear how you got here from Ungava."

In the office Bob told briefly the story of his adventures, while he ripped the letters from his shirt, where he had sewed them in a sealskin covering for safe keeping.

"Has un heard, sir, how mother an' Emily an' father is?" he asked as he handed over the mail.

"Mr. MacDonald sent his man down the other day, and he told me your mother took it pretty hard, when they buried you last week, although she has stuck to it all along that the remains Ed brought out were not yours and you were alive somewhere. Emily don't seem to change. Your father and nearly every one else in the Bay has had a good hunt. Go out to the men's kitchen for your supper now and when you've eaten come back again and we'll talk things over."

In the kitchen he heard some exaggerated details of Ed's journey out, and something of the happenings up the bay during the winter. When he had finished his meal he returned to the office, where Mr. Forbes was waiting for him.

"Well, Ungava Bob, as Mr. MacPherson calls you in his letter," said Mr. Forbes, "you've earned the rifle he gave you, and you're to keep it. Now tell me more of your adventures since you left Ungava."

Little by little he drew from Bob pretty complete details of the journey, and then told him that he had better sail the *Maid of the North* up to Kenemish, where Douglas Campbell and his father would see that he secured the salvage due him for bringing out the schooner

"An' what may salvage be, sir?" asked Bob.

"Why," answered Mr. Forbes, "you found the schooner a derelict at sea and you brought her into port. When you give her back to the owner he will have to pay you whatever amount the court decides is due you for the service, and it may be as much as one-half the value of the vessel and cargo. You'll get enough out of it to settle you comfortably for life."

Bob heard this in open-mouthed astonishment. It was too good for him to quite believe at first, but Mr. Forbes assured him that it was usual and within his rights.

They arranged that Netseksoak and Aluktook should go with him to Kenemish and later return to Fort Pelican to be paid by Mr. Forbes for their services and to be sent home by him on the company's ship, the *Eric*, on its annual voyage north

Then Bob, after thanking Mr. Forbes, rowed back to the *Maid of the North*, too full of excitement and anticipation to sleep.

With the first ray of morning light the anchor was weighed, the sails hoisted and but two days lay between Bob and home.

As he stood on the deck of the *Maid of the*

North and drank in the wild, rugged beauty of the scene around him Bob thought of that day, which seemed so long, long ago, when he and his mother, broken hearted and disconsolate were going home with little Emily, and how he had looked away at those very hills and the inspiration had come to him that led to the journey from which he was now returning. Tears came to his eyes and he said to himself,

"Sure th' Lard be good. 'Twere He put un in my head t' go, an' He were watchin' over me an' carin' for me all th' time when I were thinkin' He were losin' track o' me. I'll never doubt th' Lard again."

XXV

THE BREAK-UP

ONE evening a month after Ed Matheson started out with his gruesome burden to Wolf Bight, Dick Blake was sitting alone in the tilt at the junction of his and Ed's trails, smoking his after supper pipe and meditating on the happenings of the preceding weeks. There were some things in connection with the tragedy that he had never been able to quite clear up. Why, for instance, he asked himself, did Micmac John steal the furs and then leave them in the tilt where they were found? Had the half-breed been suddenly smitten by his conscience? That seemed most unlikely, for Dick had never discovered any indication that Micmac possessed a conscience. No possible solution of the problem presented itself. A hundred times he had probed the question, and always ended by saying, as he did now,

"'Tis strange—wonderful strange, an' I can't make un out."

He arose and knocked the ashes out of his pipe, filled the stove with wood, and then looked out into the night before going to his bunk. It was snowing thick and fast.

"'Tis well to-morrow's Sunday," he remarked. The's nasty weather comin'."

"That they is," said a voice so close to his elbow that he started back in surprise.

"Why, hello, Ed. You were givin' me a rare start, sneakin' in as quiet's a rabbit How is un?"

"Fine," said Ed, who had just come around the corner of the tilt in time to hear Dick's remark in reference to the weather "Who un talkin' to?"

"To a sensible man as agrees wi' me," answered Dick facetiously "A feller does get wonderful lonesome seein' no one an' has t' talk t' hisself sometimes."

The two entered the tilt and Ed threw off his adikey while Dick put the kettle over.

"Well," asked Dick, when Ed was finally seated, "how'd th' mother take un?"

"Rare hard on th' start off," said Ed "'Twere th' hardest thing I ever done, tellin' she, an' 'twere all I could do t' keep from breakin'

down myself I 'most cried, I were feelin' so bad for un.

"Douglas were there an' Bessie were visitin th' sick maid, which were a blessin', fer Richard were away on his trail.

"I goes in an' finds un happy an' thinkin maybe Bob'd be comin'. I finds th' bones gettin' weak in my legs, soon's I sees un, an' th' mother, soon's she sees me up an' says she's knowin' somethin' happened t' Bob, an' I has t' tell she wi'out waitin' t' try t' make un easy's I'd been plannin' t' do. She 'most faints, but after a while she asks me t' tell she how Bob were killed, an' I tells.

"Then she's wantin' t' see a bit o' the clothes we found, an' when she looks un over she raises her head an' says, '*Them* weren't Bob's. I knows Bob's clothes, an' them weren't *his*.' When I tells 'bout findin' *two* axes she says Bob were havin' only one axe, an' then she's believin' Bob wasn't got by th' wolves, an' is livin' somewheres.

"Douglas goes for Richard, an' when Richard comes he says th' clothes's Bob's an' th' gun *ain't* an' Bob were havin' only one axe.

"Richard's not doubtin' th' remains was Bob's

though, an' o' course the's no doubtin' *that*. Th' clothes's gettin' so stained up I'm thinkin' th' mother'd not be knowin' un But Richard sure would be knowin' th' gun, an' that's what *I'm* wonderin' at."

"'Tis rare strange," assented Dick. "An' *I'm* wonderin' why Micmac John were leavin' th' fur in th' 'tilt after stealin' un. That's what *I'm* wonderin' at."

The whole evening was thus spent in discussing the pros and cons of the affair. They both decided that while the gun and axe question were beyond explanation, there was no doubt that Bob had been destroyed by wolves and the remains that they found were his.

The plan that Bill had suggested for hunting the trails without taking Sunday rest, thus enabling them to attend to a part of Bob's Big Hill trail, was resorted to, and the winter's work was the hardest, they all agreed, that they had ever put in.

January and February were excessively cold months and during that period, when the fur bearing animals keep very close to their lairs, the catch was indifferent. But with the more moderate weather that began with March and

continued until May the harvest was a rich one for it was one of those seasons, after a year of unusual scarcity, as the previous two years had been, when the fur bearing animals come in some inexplicable way in great numbers, and food game also is plentiful.

At length the hunting season closed, when the mild weather with daily thaws arrived. The fur that was now caught was deteriorating to such an extent that it was not wise to continue catching it. The traps on the various trails were sprung and hung upon trees or placed upon rocks, where they could be readily found again, and Dick and Ed joined Bill at the river tilt, where the boat had been cached to await the breaking up of the river, and here enjoyed a respite from their labours.

Ptarmigans in flocks of hundreds fed upon the tender tops of the willows that lined the river banks, and these supplied them with an abundance of fresh meat, varied occasionally by rabbits, two or three porcupines and a lynx that Dick shot one day near the tilt. This lynx meat they roasted by an open fire outside the tilt, and considered it a great treat. It may be said that the roasted lynx resembles in flavour and texture

prime veal, and it is indeed, when properly cooked, delicious; and the hunter knows how to cook it properly. Trout, too, which they caught through the ice, were plentiful. They had brought with them when coming to the trails in the autumn, tackle for the purpose of securing fish at this time. The lines were very stout, thick ones, and the hooks were large. A good sized piece of lead, melted and moulded around the stem of the hook near the eye, weighted it heavily, and it was baited with a piece of fat pork and a small piece of red cloth or yarn, tied below the lead. The rod was a stout stick three feet in length and an inch thick.

With this equipment the hook was dropped into the hole and moved up and down slowly, until a fish took hold, when it was immediately pulled out. The trout were very sluggish at this season of the year and made no fight, and were therefore readily landed. The most of them weighed from two to five pounds each, and in deed any smaller than that were spurned and thrown back into the hole "t' grow up," as Ed put it.

One evening a rain set in and for four days and nights it never ceased. It poured down as if the

gates of the eternal reservoirs of heaven had been opened and the flood let loose to drown the world. The snow became a sea of slush and miniature rivers ran down to join forces with the larger stream.

At first the waters overflowed the ice, but at last it gave way to the irresistible force that assailed it, and giving way began to move upon the current in great unwieldly masses.

The river rose to its brim and burst its banks. Trees were uprooted, and mingling with the ice surged down towards the sea upon the crest of the unleashed, untamed torrent. The break-up that the men were awaiting had come.

"'Tis sure a fearsome sight," remarked Bill one day when the storm was at its height, as he returned from "a look outside" to join Dick and Ed. who sat smoking their pipes in silence in the tilt.

"An' how'd un like t' be ridin' one o' them cakes o' ice out there, an' no way o' reachin' shore?" asked Ed.

"I wouldn't be ridin' un from choice, an' if I were ridin' un I'm thinkin' 'twould be my last ride," answered Bill.

"Once I were ridin' un, an' ridin' un from

choice," said Ed, with the air of one who had a story to tell.

"No you weren't never ridin' un. What un tell such things for, Ed?" broke in Dick. "Un has dreams an' tells un for happenin's, I'm thinkin'."

Ed ignored the interruption as though he had not heard it, and proceeded to relate to Bill his wonderful adventure.

"Once," said he,—"'twere five year ago—I were waitin' at my lower tilt for th' break-up t' come, an' has my boat hauled up t' what I thinks is a safe place, when I gets up one mornin' t' find th' water come up extra high in th' night an' th' boat gone wi' th' ice. That leaves me in a rare bad fix, wi' nothin' t' do, seems t' me, but wait for th' water t' settle, an' cruise down th' river afoot.

"I'm not fancyin' th' cruise, an' I watches th' ice an' wonders, when I marks chance cakes o' ice driftin' down close t' shore an' touchin' land now an' agin as un goes, could I ride un. Th longer I watches un th' more I thinks 'twould be a fine way t' ride on un, an' at last I makes up my pack an' cuts a good pole, an' watches my chance, which soon comes. A big cake comes

rollin' down an' I steps aboard un an' away I goes.

"'Twere fine for a little while, an' I says, 'Ed, now *you* knows th' thing t' do in a tight place.'

"'Twere a rare pretty sight watchin' th' shore slippin' past, an' I forgets as 'tis a piece o' ice I'm ridin' till I happens t' look around an' finds th' cake o' ice, likewise myself, in th' middle o' th' river, an' no way o' gettin' ashore. The's nothin' t' do but hang on, an' I hangs.

"Then I sees th' Gull Island Rapids an' I 'most loses my nerve. 'Tis a fearsome torrent at best, as un knows, but now wi' high flood 'tis like ten o' unself at low water. Th' waves beats up twenty foot high."

Ed paused here to light his pipe which had a way of always going out when he reached the most dramatic point in his stories. When it was finally going again, he continued:

"Lucky 'twere for me th' rocks were all covered. In we goes, me an' th' ice, an' I hangs on an' shuts my eyes. When I opens un we're floatin' peaceful an' steady below th' rapids, an' I feels like breathin' agin.

"Then we runs th' Porcupine Rapids, an' I begins t' think I has th' Muskrat Falls t' run too

which would be th' endin' o' me, sure. But I ain't. I uses my pole an' works up t' shore, an' just as we gets th' rush o' th' water above th' falls I lands.

"That were how I rid th' river on a' ice cake.'

"Where'd ye land, now?" asked Dick. "This side o' th' river or t' other?"

"This side o' un," answered Ed, complacently

"'Tis sheer rock this side, an' no holt t' land on," said Dick, triumphantly

"Th' water were t' th' top o' th' rock," explained Ed.

"Then," said Dick, with the air of one who has trapped another, "th' hull country were flooded an' there were no falls."

Ed looked at him for a moment disdainfully.

"I were on th' ice six days, an' *I knows*."

The men were held in waiting for several days after the storm ceased for the river to clear of débris and sink again to something like its normal volume, before it was considered safe for them to begin the voyage out. Then on a fair June morning the boat was laden with the outfit and fur

"Poor Bob," said Dick, as Bob's things were placed in the boat. "Th' poor lad were so hope-

ful when we were comin' in t' th' trails, an' now un's gone. 'Twill be hard t' meet his mother an Richard."

"Aye, 'twill be hard," assented Ed "She'll be takin' un rare hard. Our comin' home'll be bringin' his goin' away plain t' she again."

"An' Emily, too," spoke up Bill. "They were thinkin' so much o' each other."

Then the journey was begun, full of danger and excitement as they shot through rushing rapids and on down the river towards Eskimo Bay, where great and unexpected tidings awaited them.

XXVI

BACK AT WOLF BIGHT

BOB'S apparent death was a sore shock to Richard Gray. When Douglas found him on the trail and broke the news to him as gently as possible, he seemed at first hardly to comprehend it. He was stunned. He said little, but followed Douglas back to the cabin like one in a mesmeric sleep. A few days before he had gone away happy and buoyant, now he shuffled back like an old man.

Mechanically he looked at the remains and examined the gun and the axe—Ed had brought out but one of the axes found by the rock with the remains—and said, "Th' gun s not Bob's. Th' axe were his."

"Th' gun's not Bob's!" exclaimed Mrs. Gray "Th' clothes is not Bob's! Now I knows 'tis not my boy we've found."

"Yes, Mary," said he broken-heartedly. "'Tis Bob th' wolves got. Our poor lad is gone No one else could ha' had his things."

He and Douglas made a coffin into which the remains were tenderly placed, and it was put upon a high platform near the house, out of reach of animals, there to rest until the spring, when the snow would be gone and it could be buried.

For a whole week after this sad duty was performed the father sat by the cabin stove and brooded, a broken-hearted, dispirited counterpart of what he had been at the Christmas time. It was the man's nature to be silent in seasons of misfortune. During the previous year, when luck had been so against him, this characteristic of silent brooding had shown itself markedly, but then he did not remain in the house and neglect his work as he did now. He seemed to have lost all heart and all ambition. He scarcely troubled to feed the dogs, and the few tasks that he did perform were evidently irksome and unpleasant to him, as things that interfered with his reveries.

From morning until night Richard Gray nursed the grief in his bosom, but never referred to the tragedy unless it was first mentioned by another; and at such times he said as little as possible about it, answering questions briefly, offering nothing himself, and plainly showing that he did not wish to converse upon the subject.

Over and over again he reviewed to himself every phase of Bob's life, from the time when, a wee lad, Bob climbed on his knee of an evening to beg for stories of bear hunts, and great gray wolves that harried the hunters, and how the animals were captured on the trail; and through the years into which the little lad grew into youth and approached manhood, down to the day that he left home, looking so noble and stalwart, to brave, for the sake of those he loved, the unknown dangers that lurked in the rude, wild wastes beyond the line of blue mysterious hills to the northward. And now the poor remains enclosed in the rough box that rested upon the scaffold outside were all that remained of him. And that was the end of all the plans that he and the mother had made for their son's future, of all their hopes and fine pictures.

Mrs. Gray had never seen her husband in so downcast and despondent a mood, and as the days passed she began to worry about him and finally became alarmed. He had lost all interest in everything, and had a strange, unnatural look in his eyes that she did not like.

One evening she sat down by his side, and taking his hand, said:

"Be a brave man, Richard, and bear up. T' Lard's never let Bob die so. That were *not* Bob as th' wolves got. I'm knowin' our lad's somewheres alive. I were dreamin' last night o' seein' he—an'—I feels it—I feels it—an' I can't go agin my feelin'."

"No, Mary, 'twere Bob," he answered.

"I feels 'tweren't, but if 'twere 'tis th' Lard's will, an' 'tis our duty t' be brave an' bear up 'Tis hard—rare hard—but bear up, Richard—an' bear un like a man. Remember, Richard, we has th' maid spared to us."

And so, heart-broken though she was herself, she comforted and encouraged him, as is the way of women, for in times of great misfortune they are often the braver of the sexes. Her husband did not know the hours of wakeful uncertainty and helplessness and despair that Mrs Gray spent, as she lay long into the nights thinking and thinking, until sometimes it seemed that she would go mad.

Bessie, gentle and sympathetic, was the pillar upon which they all leaned during those first days after the dreadful tidings came. It was her presence that made life possible. Like a good angel she moved about the house, unobtrusively minis

tering to them, and Mrs. Gray more than once said,

"I'm not knowin' what we'd do, Bessie, if 'twere not for you."

After a week of silent despondency the father roused himself to some extent from the lethargy into which he had fallen, and returned to his trail. The work brought back life and energy, and when, a fortnight later, he came back, he had resumed somewhat his old bearing and manner, though not all of the buoyancy. He entered the cabin with the old greeting—"An' how's my maid been wi'out her daddy?" It made the others feel better and happier; and he was almost his natural self again when he left them for another period.

The report of Bob's death did not appear to affect Emily as greatly as her mother feared it would. She was silent, and took less interest in her doll, and seemed to be constantly expecting something to occur. One day after her father had left them she called her mother to her, and, taking her hand to draw her to a seat on the couch, asked:

"Mother, do angels ever come by day, or be it always by night?"

"I'm—I'm—not knowin', dear. They comes both times, I'm thinkin'—but mostly by night—I'm—not knowin'," faltered the mother.

"Does un think Bob's angel ha' been comin' by night while we sleeps, mother? I been watchin', an' he've never come while I wakes—an' I'm wonderin' an' wonderin'."

"No—not while we sleeps—no—I'm not knowin'," and then she buried her face in Emily's pillow and wept.

"Bob's knowin', mother, how we longs t' see he," continued Emily, as she stroked her mother's hair, "an' he'd sure be comin' if he were killed. He'd sure be doin' that so we could see un. But he's not been comin', an' I'm thinkin' he's livin', just as you were sayin'. Bob'll be home wi' th' break-up, mother, I'm thinkin'—wi' th' break-up, mother, for his angel ha' never come, as un sure would if he were dead."

On two or three other occasions after this—once in the night—Emily called Mrs. Gray to her to reiterate this belief. She would not accept even the possibility of Bob's death without first seeing his angel, which she was so positive would come to visit them if he were really dead; and it was this that kept back the grief that she would

have felt had she believed that she was never to see him again.

Bessie remained with them until the last of February, when her father drove the dogs over to take her home, as many of the trappers were expected in from their trails about the first of March to spend a few days at the Post, and her mother needed her help with the additional work that this entailed. Emily was loath to part from her, but her father promised that she should return again for a visit as soon as the break-up came and before the fishing commenced.

Douglas Campbell was very good to the Grays, and at least once each week, and sometimes oftener, walked over to spend the day and cheer them up. Often he brought some little delicacy for Emily, and she looked forward to his visits with much pleasure.

One day towards the last of May he asked Emily:

"How'd un like t' go t' St. Johns an' have th' doctors make a fine, strong maid of un again? I'm thinkin' th' mother's needin' her maid t' help her now."

"Oh, I'd like un fine, sir!" exclaimed Emily.

"I'm thinkin' we'll have t' send un. 'Twill be

a long while away from home. You won't be gettin' lonesome now?"

"I'm fearin' I'll be gettin' lonesome for mother, but I'll stand un t' get well an' walk again."

"Now does un hear that," said Douglas to Mrs. Gray, who at that moment came in from out of doors. "Your little maid's goin' t' St. Johns t' have th' doctors make she walk again, so she can be helpin' wi' th' housekeepin'."

"The's no money t' send she," said Mrs. Gray sadly. "'Tis troublin' me wonderful, an' I'm not knowin' what t' do—'tis troublin' me so."

"I'm thinkin' th' money'll be found t' send she—I'm *knowin'* 'twill," Douglas prophesied convincingly. "Ed were sayin' Bob had a rare lot o' fur that he'd caught before th'—before th' New Year—a fine lot o' martens an' th' silver foxes. Them'll pay Bob's debt an' pay for th' maid's goin' too. That's what Bob were wantin'."

"Did Ed say now as Bob were gettin' all that fur?" she asked. "I were feelin' so sore bad over Bob's goin' I were never hearin' un—I were not thinkin' about th' lad's fur—I were thinkin' o' he."

"Aye, Ed were sayin' that. Emily must be ready t' go on th' cruise t' meet th' first trip o'

th' mail boat. Th' maid must be leavin' here by th' last o' June," planned Douglas.

"But we'll not be havin' th' money then—not till th' men comes out, an' then we has t' sell th' fur first t' get th' money," Mrs. Gray explained. "Then—then I hopes th' maid may go. 'Tis what Bob were goin' t' th' bush for—an' takin' all th' risks for—my poor lad—he were countin' on un so——"

"We'll not be waitin'. We'll not be waitin'. *I* has th' money now an' th' maid must be goin' th' *first* trip o' th' mail boat," said Douglas, in an authoritative manner.

"Oh, Douglas, you be wonderful good—so wonderful good." And Mrs. Gray began to cry.

"Now! Now!" exclaimed the soft-hearted old trapper "'Tis nothin' t' be cryin' about What un cryin' for, now?"

"I'm—not—knowin'—only you be so good—an' I were wantin' so bad t' have Emily go—I were wantin' so wonderful bad—an' 'twill save she—'twill save she!"

"'Tis no kindness. 'Tis no kindness. 'Tis Bob's fur pays for un—no kindness o' mine," he insisted.

Emily took Douglas' hand and drew him to her until she could reach his face. Then with a palm on each cheek she kissed his lips, and with her arms about his neck buried her face for a moment in his white beard.

"There! There!" he exclaimed when she had released him. "Now what un makin' love t' me for?"

Richard returned that evening from his last trip over his trail for the season, and he was much pleased with the arrangement as to Emily.

"Your daddy'll be lonesome wi'out un," said he, "but 'twill be fine t' think o' my maid comin' back walkin' again—rare fine."

"An' 'twill be rare hard t' be goin'," she said. "I'm 'most wishin' I weren't havin' t' go."

"But when you comes back, maid, you'll be well, an' think, now, how happy that'll make un," Mrs. Gray encouraged. "Th' Lard's good t' be providin' th' way. 'Twill be hard for un an' for us all, but th' Lard always pays us for th' hard times an' th' sorrow He brings us, wi' good times an' a rare lot o' happiness after, if we only waits wi' patience an' faith for un."

"Aye, mother, I knows, an' I *is* glad—oh, *so* glad t' know I's t' be well again," said Emily

very earnestly. "But," she added, "I'm thinkin' twould be so fine if you or daddy were goin' wi' me. Bob were countin' on un so—I minds how Bob were countin' on my goin'—an' he's not here t' know about un—an' I feels wonderful bad when I thinks of un."

Of course it was quite out of the question for either the father or the mother to go with her, for that would more than double the expense and could not be afforded. There was no certainty as to how much would be coming to them after Bob's share of the furs were sold. This could not be estimated even approximately for they had not so much as seen the pelts yet. Richard, grown somewhat pessimistic with the years of ill fortune, even doubted if, after Bob's debt to Mr. MacDonald was paid, there would be sufficient left to reimburse Douglas for the money he had agreed to advance to meet Emily's expenses. "But then," he said, "I suppose 'twill work out somehow."

At last the great storm came that opened the rivers and smashed the bay ice into bits, and when the fury of the wind was spent and the rain ceased the sun came out with a new warmth that bespoke the summer close at hand. The tide

carried the splintered ice to the open sea, wild geese honked overhead in their northern flight, seals played in the open water, and the loon's weird laugh broke the wilderness silence. The world was awakening from its long slumber, and summer was at hand.

Tom Black kept his word, and when the ice was gone brought Bessie over in his boat to stay with Emily until she should go to the hospital. It was a beautiful, sunny afternoon when they arrived and Bessie brought a good share of the sunshine into the cabin with her.

"Oh, Bessie!" cried Emily, as her friend burst into the room. "I were thinkin' you'd not be comin', Bessie! Oh, 'tis fine t' have you come!"

Tom remained the night, and he and Bessie cheered up the Grays, for it had been a lonely, monotonous period since their last visit, and never a caller save Douglas had they had.

Time, the great healer of sorrow, had somewhat mitigated the shock of Bob's disappearance, and had reconciled them to some extent to his loss. But now the sore was opened again when, one day, a grave was dug in the spruce woods behind the cabin, and the coffin, which had been resting upon the scaffold since January, was

taken down and reverently lowered into the earth by Richard and Douglas. Mrs. Gray, though still firm in the intuitive belief that her boy lived, wept piteously when the earth clattered down upon the box and hid it forever from view.

"I knows 'tis not Bob," she sobbed, "but where is my lad? What has become o' my brave lad?"

Bessie, with wet eyes, comforted her with soothing words and gentle caresses.

Richard and Douglas did their work silently, both certain beyond a doubt that it was Bob they had laid to rest.

Nothing was said to Emily of the burial. That would have done her no good and they did not wish to give her the pain that it would have caused.

The days were rapidly lengthening, and the sun coming boldly nearer the earth was tempering and mellowing the atmosphere, and every pleasant afternoon a couch was made for Emily out of doors, where she could bask in the sunshine and breathe the air charged with the perfume of the spruce and balsam forest above, and drink in the wild beauties of the wilderness about her.

Here she lay, alone, one day late in June

while her mother and Bessie washed the dinner dishes before Bessie came out to join her, and her father and Douglas, who had come over to dinner, smoked their pipes and chatted in the house. She was listening to the joyous song of a robin, that had just returned from its far-off southland pilgrimage, and was thinking as she listened of the long, long journey that she was soon to take. Her heart was sad, for it was a sore trial to be separated all the summer from her father and mother and never see them once.

She looked down the bight out towards the broader waters of the bay, for that was the way she was to go. Suddenly as she looked a boat turned the point into the bight. It was a strange boat and she could not see who was in it, but it held her attention as it approached, for a visitor was quite unusual at this time of the year. Presently the single occupant stood up in the boat, to get a better view of the cabin.

"Bob! *Bob!* BOB!" shouted Emily, quite wild and beside herself. "Mother! Father! Bob is coming! *Bob* is coming!"

Those in the house rushed out in alarm, for they thought the child had gone quite mad, but

when they reached her they, too, seemed to lose their reason. Mrs. Gray ran wildly to the sandy shore where the boat would land, extending her arms towards it and fairly screaming,

"My lad! Oh, my lad!"

Bessie was at her heels and Richard and Douglas followed.

When Bob stepped ashore his mother clasped him to her arms and wept over him and fondled him, and he, taller by an inch than when he left her, bronzed and weather-beaten and ragged, drew her close to him and hugged her again and again, and stroked her hair, and cried too, while Richard and Douglas stood by, blowing their noses on their red bandana handkerchiefs and trying to took very self-composed.

When his mother let him go Bob greeted the others, forgetting himself so far as to kiss Bessie, who blushed and did not resent his boldness.

Emily simply would not let him go. She held him tight to her, and called him her "big, brave brother," and said many times:

"I were knowin' you'd come back to us, Bob I were just *knowin'* you'd come back."

An hour passed in a babble of talk and exchange of explanations almost before they were

aware, and then Mrs. Gray suddenly realized that Bob had had no dinner.

"Now un must be rare hungry, Bob," she explained. "Richard, carry Emily in with un now, an' we'll have a cup o' tea wi' Bob, while he has his dinner."

"Let me carry un," said Bob, gathering Emily into his arms.

In the house they were all so busy talking and laughing, while Mrs. Gray prepared the meal for Bob, that no one noticed a boat pull into the bight and three men land upon the beach below the cabin; and so, just as they were about to sit down to the table, they were taken completely by surprise when the door opened and in walked Dick Blake, Ed Matheson and Bill Campbell.

The three stopped short in open-mouthed astonishment.

"'Tis Bob's ghost!" finally exclaimed Ed.

They were soon convinced, however, that Bob's hand grasp was much more real than that of any ghost, and the greetings that followed were uproarious.

Nearly the whole afternoon they sat around the table while Bob told the story of his adventures. A comparison of experiences made it quite

certain that the remains they had supposed to have been Bob's were the remains of Micmac John and the mystery of the half-breed's failure to return to the tilt for the pelts he had stolen was therefore cleared up.

"An' th' Nascaupees," said Bob, "be not fearsome murderous folk as we was thinkin' un, but like other folks, an' un took rare fine care o' me. I'm thinkin' they'd not be hurtin' white folks an' white folk don't hurt *they*."

Finally the men sat back from the table for a smoke and chat while the dishes were being cleared away by Mrs. Gray and Bessie.

"Now I were sure thinkin' Bob were a ghost," said Ed, as he lighted his pipe with a brand from the stove, "and 'twere scarin' me a bit. I never seen but one ghost in my life and that were ——"

"We're not wantin' t' hear that ghost yarn, Ed," broke in Dick, and Ed forgot his story in the good-natured laughter that followed.

The home-coming was all that Bob had hoped and desired it to be and the arrival of his three friends from the trail made it complete. His heart was full that evening when he stepped out of doors to watch the setting sun. As he gazed at the spruce-clad hills that hid the great, wild

north from which he had so lately come, the afterglow blazed up with all its wondrous colour, glorifying the world and lighting the heavens and the water and the hills beyond with the radiance and beauty of a northern sunset. The spirit of it was in Bob's soul, and he said to himself,

"'Tis wonderful fine t' be livin', an' 'tis a wonderful fine world t' live in, though 'twere seemin' hard sometimes, in the winter. An' th' comin' home has more than paid for th' trouble I were havin' gettin' here."

XXVII

THE CRUISE TO ST. JOHNS

WHEN Bob and the two Eskimos sailed the *Maid of the North* up the bay from Fort Pelican it was found advisable to run the schooner to an anchorage at Kenemish where she could lie with less exposure to the wind than at Wolf Bight. The moment she was made snug and safe Bob went ashore to Douglas Campbell's cabin, where he learned that his old friend had gone to Wolf Bight early that morning to spend the day.

The lad's impatience to reach home would brook no waiting, and so, leaving Netseksoak and Aluktook in charge of the vessel, he proceeded alone in a small boat, reaching there as we have seen early in the afternoon.

What to do with the schooner now that she had brought him safely to his destination was a problem that Bob had not been able to solve. The vessel was not his, and it was plainly his duty to find her owner and deliver the schooner to him, but how to go about it he did not know

That evening when the candles were lighted and all were gathered around the stove, he put the question to the others.

"I'm not knowin' now who th' schooner belongs to," said he, "an' I'm not knowin' how t' find th' owner. I'm wonderin' what t' do with un."

"'Tis some trader owns un I'm thinkin'," Mrs. Gray suggested.

"'Tis sure some trader," agreed Bob, "and the's a rare lot o' fur aboard she an' the's enough trader's goods t' stock a Post. Mr Forbes were tellin' me I should be gettin' salvage for bringin' she t' port safe."

"Aye," confirmed Douglas, "you should be gettin' salvage. 'Tis th' law o' th' sea an' but right. We'll ha' t' be lookin' t' th' salvage for un lad."

"But how'll we be gettin' un now?" Bob asked, much puzzled. "An' how'll we be findin' th' owner?"

"Th' owner," explained Douglas, "will be doin' th' findin' hisself I'm thinkin'. But t' get th' salvage th' schooner'll ha' t' be took t' St. Johns. Now I'm not knowin' but I could pilot she over. 'Tis a many a long year since I were

here but I'm thinkin' I could manage un, and we'll make up a crew an' sail she over."

"We'll be needin' five t' handle she right," said Bob. "'Twere wonderful hard gettin' on wi' just me an' th' two huskies. We'll sure need five."

"Aye, 'twill need five of us," assented Douglas "I'm thinkin' now Dick an' Ed an' Bill would like t' be makin' th' cruise an' seein' St. Johns, an' we has th' crew right here."

The three men were not only willing to go but delighted with the prospect of the journey They had never in their lives been outside the bay and the voyage offered them an opportunity to see something of the great world of which they had heard so much.

"I'll be wantin' t' go home first," said Dick, "an' so will Ed, but we'll be t' Kenemish an' ready t' start in three days."

"'Twill be a fine way t' take th' maid t' th' mail boat so th' doctor can take she with un," suggested Richard.

"An' father an' mother an' Bessie can go t' th' mail boat with us," spoke up Emily, from her couch. "Oh, 'twill be fine t' have you all go t' th' mail boat with me!"

And so this arrangement was made and carried out. On the appointed day every one was aboard the *Maid of the North*, and with light hearts the voyage was begun.

Two days later they reached Fort Pelican, when Netseksoak and Aluktook went ashore to await the arrival of the ship that was to take them to their far northern home, and Bob said good-bye to the two faithful friends with whom he had braved so many dangers and suffered so many hardships.

The following morning the mail boat steamed in, and Emily was transferred to her in charge of the doctor, who greeted her kindly and promised,

"You'll be going home a new girl in the fall, and your father and mother won't know you."

Nevertheless the parting from her friends was very hard for Emily, and the mother and child, and Bessie too, shed a good many tears, though the fact that she was to see Bob in a little while in St. Johns comforted Emily somewhat.

When the mail boat was finally gone, Richard Gray, with his wife and Bessie, turned homeward in their dory, which had been brought down in tow of the *Maid of the North*, and the schooner

spread her sails to the breeze and passed to the southward.

With some delays caused by bad weather, three weeks elapsed before the *Maid of the North* one day, late in July, sailed through the narrows past the towering cliffs of Signal Hill, and anchored in the land-locked harbour of St. Johns.

In the interim the mail boat had made another voyage to the north, and brought back with her Captain Hanks and his crew, who had worked their way to Indian Harbour in their open boat to await the steamer there. Of course Skipper Sam had heard that Bob was coming with the *Maid of the North*, and when the schooner finally reached her anchorage he was on the lookout for her, and at once came aboard with much blustering, to demand her immediate delivery. He believed he had some unsophisticated livyeres to deal with, whom he could easily browbeat out of their rights. What was his surprise, then, when Douglas stepped forward, and said very authoritatively:

"Bide a bit, now, skipper. When 'tis decided how much salvage you pays th' lad, an' after you pays un, you'll be havin' th' schooner an' her cargo, an' not till then."

Bob's first thought upon going ashore was of Emily, and he went immediately to the hospital to see her. The operation had been performed nearly two weeks previously and she was recovering rapidly. When he was admitted to the ward, and she glimpsed him as he entered the door, her delight was almost beyond bounds.

"Oh! Oh!" she exclaimed, when he kissed her. "'Tis fine t' see un, Bob—'tis *so* fine. An' now I'll be gettin' well wonderful quick."

And she did. She was discharged from the hospital quite cured a month later. At first she was a little weak, but youth and a naturally strong constitution were in her favour, and she regained her strength with remarkable rapidity.

Finally a settlement was arranged with Captain Hanks. The furs on board the *Maid of the North* were appraised at market value, and when Bob received his salvage he found himself possessed of fifteen thousand dollars.

He reimbursed Douglas the amount advanced for Emily's hospital expenses, but the kind old trapper would not accept another cent, though the lad wished to pay him for his services in piloting the vessel to St. Johns.

"Put un in th' bank. You'll be needin' un

some day t' start un in life. Hold on t' un." was the good advice that Douglas gave, and accordingly the money was deposited in the bank.

Bob's share of the furs that he had trapped himself he very generously insisted upon giving to Dick and Ed and Bill. They were diffident about accepting them at first, saying:

"We were doin' nothin' for un."

But Bob pressed the furs upon them, and finally they accepted them. The silver fox which he wept over that cold December evening sold for four hundred and fifty dollars, and the one Dick found frozen in the trap by the deer's antlers for three hundred dollars.

Neither did Bob forget Netseksoak and Aluktook. Money would have been quite useless to the Eskimos as he well knew, so he sent them rifles and many things which they could use and would value.

Laden with gifts for the home folks, and satiated with looking at the shops and great buildings and wonders of St. Johns, they were a very happy party when at last the mail boat steamed northward with them

Bob Gray was very proud of his little chum when, one beautiful September day, his boat

ground its prow upon the sands at Wolf Bight and with all the strength and vigour of youth she bounded ashore and ran to meet the expectant and happy parents.

As, with full hearts, the reunited family of Richard Gray walked up the path to the cabin, Bob said reverently:

"Th' Lard has ways o' doin' things that seem strange an' wonderful hard sometimes when He's doin' un; but He always does un right, an' a rare 'ot better'n we could plan."

XXVIII

IN AFTER YEARS

DURING the twenty years that have elapsed since the incidents transpired that are here recorded, the mission doctors and the mission hospitals have come to The Labrador to give back life and health to the unfortunate sick and injured folk of the coast, who in the old days would have been doomed to die or to go through life helpless cripples or invalids for the lack of medical or surgical care, as would have been the case with little Emily but for the efforts of her noble brother. New people, too, have come into Eskimo Bay, though on the whole few changes have taken place and most of the characters met with in the preceding pages still live.

Douglas Campbell in the fullness of years has passed away. But he is not forgotten, and in the spring-time loving hands gather the wild flowers, which grow so sparsely there, and scatter them upon the mossy mound that marks his resting place

Ed Matheson to this day tells the story of the adventures of Ungava Bob—as Bob Gray has thenceforth been called—not forgetting to embellish the tale with flights of fancy; and of course Dick Blake warns the listeners that these imaginative variations are "just some o' Ed's yarns," and Bob laughs at them good-naturedly.

It may be asked to what use Bob put his newly acquired wealth, and the reader's big sister, should this book fall into her hands, will surely wish to know whether Bob and Bessie married, and what became of Manikawan. But these are matters that belong to another story that perhaps some day it may seem worth while to tell.

For the present, adieu to Ungava Bob.

THE END

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